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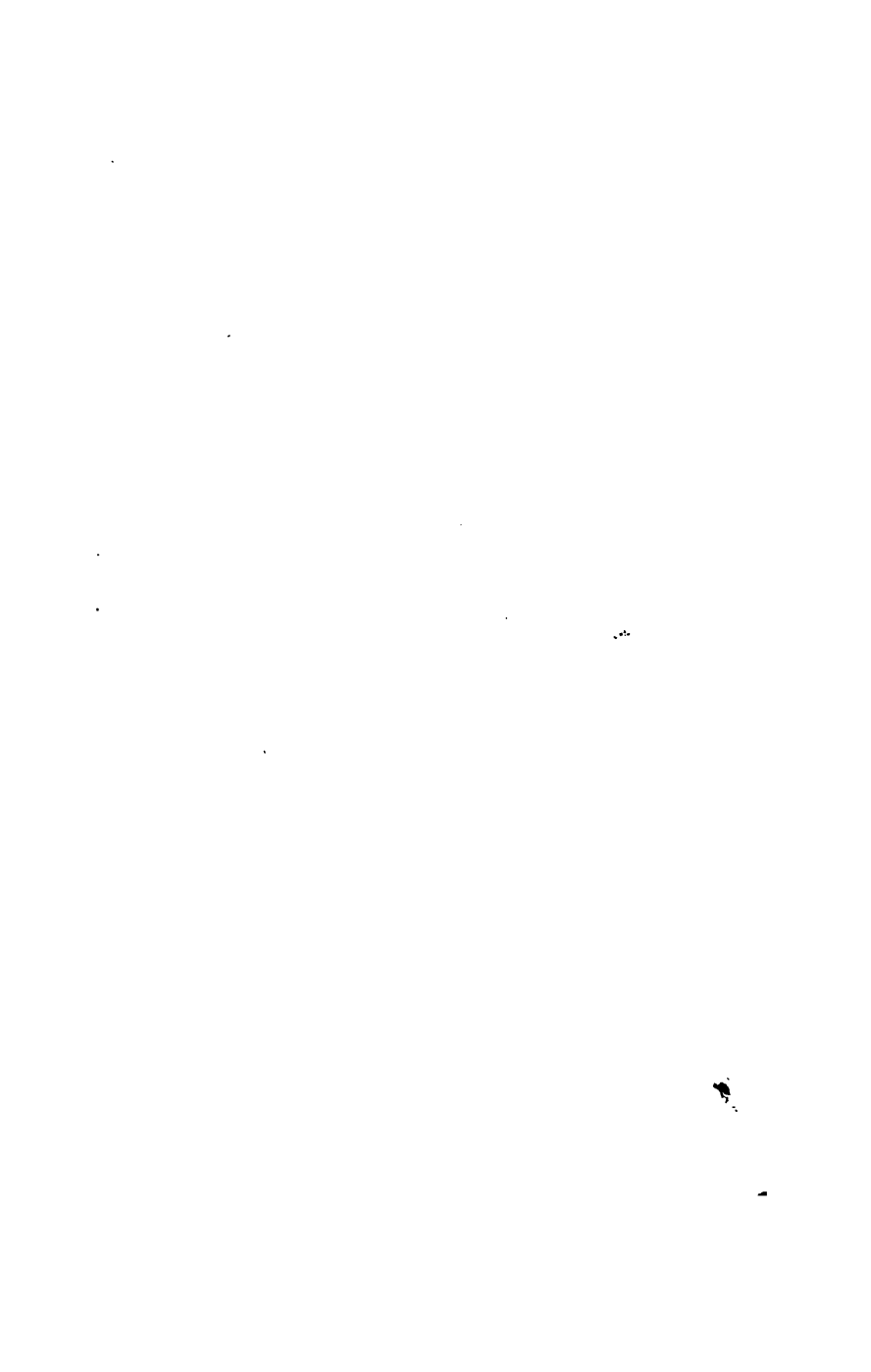
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CLAUDIA.

BY

MRS. FREDERICK PRIDEAUX.

"It is old and plain."

TWELFTH NIGHT.

LONDON:

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ADAMS

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CLAUDIA.

PART I.

12 THE unrelenting summer sun of Rome
Poured from the zenith,—not a line of shade
Edged the white streets,—when Brân, a British prince,
The son of Llyr, the sire of Caradoc,
Sat wrapped in sadness at Narcissus' gate :
Narcissus, freedman and chief favourite
Of Claudius Cæsar.

For when Llyr, the king
Of the fierce tribe that held the Cymric coast
North of the tawny channel which receives
The rivers of the west, had passed away,
His son, the patient, many-thoughted Brân,

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Searching his spirit, could not find the skill
To rule their turbulence in times of war.
Though brave like all his sires, the noble prince
Was minded otherwise. He could not hear
The trumpets of ambition : they were drowned
By a still voice which drew him from the midst
Of evil men, to stand above the world
And wait the dawning of a better day.
Wherefore, withdrawing from the sovereignty,
He left it in the hands of Caradoc,
His younger son ; the elder prince had fallen
In Llyr's last battle with the Roman power,
Led on by Aulus Plantius. For himself,
He passed, a willing exile, from the court
Of grey Trefrân ; and crossed the tawny sea,
The Summer-country, and the Deep-valled Land ;
And paused not, save for needful rest and food,
Till in the centre of the granite horn
That pierces far into the unknown seas
He found the solitude his soul desired
And grew alive again.

But Caradoc,
Whose giant heart sent out a pulse which throbbed
On to the farthest limits of his sway,

Aroused the fierce Silures, and reknit
The old alliance with the North and West,
Till as one man the Cymric sovereignties
Rose on the rash invaders of the world,
And thrust them eastward from the Sabren's brink,
And for nine glorious years with desperate arms
Held them at bay. But as stern winter treads
Close on the heels of autumn, flushed and full,
So did disaster follow victory.
Ere the ninth year had closed, Ostorius,—
Whose firmer hand now led the alien powers,—
While Plantius in ovation entered Rome,—
Vanquished the dwindled forces of the king,
Who, trusting in a traitress, was betrayed,
And sent a trophy to imperial Rome.
A splendid gem set round with precious stones,
His queen, his brothers, and his only child.
Then all the pageant-loving city thronged
About his steps, eager to feast their eyes
Upon this marvellous barbarian,
Who for a half-score of astonished years
Defied the arms that had defied the world.
And now the vast procession wound along
The shouting streets to where, without the walls,

The sun flashed hotly on the glittering arms
Of the prætorian bands that lined the fields,
And clustered thickly round the imperial thrones
Of Agrippina and of Claudius.
First came the followers of the captive king,
Dejected and ashamed ; and with them, borne
On polished cars, the trophies of his wars :
Rich golden torques and amber necklaces
Won in a hundred fights. Then as these passed,
The noisy rapture, rending all the air,
Swept on from street to street, but followed still
By awe-struck murmurs : for behind the cars
The royal captives dragged their weary limbs,
Heavy with gilded chains : and last of all,
With eye unquenched and an unfettered air
That mocked his bonds, came Caradoc the king.
Now when they reached the throne of Claudius
All but the king debased themselves to kneel
In shameful supplication for their lives.
But as for him, he stood erect and spoke
Kingly and soldierly, as speaks a man
Unto his fellow : lifting all the while
His hand in fitting cadence to his words
As easily as if the ponderous chain

Were a light wreath. Then his majestic air,—
His words of unadorned, unboastful truth,—
Went to such heart as Cæsar still possessed :
So that a spark of nobleness revived
Within him ; and much marvelling to himself
What this might mean, but conscious of a sense
Of unaccustomed light and warmth, resigned
His soul to the strange pleasure, and decreed
Life and free pardon to the king, his queen,
His princely brothers; and his only child,
Eirgen, the gold-bright princess.

So they dwelt

As prisoners in a house assigned to them,
A splendid palace on the Palatine,
Or what seemed such to unaccustomed eyes.
And though the tooth of secret anguish gnawed
The heart of Caradoc, he bore his pangs
In silence ; while his feebler kindred sank
Beneath their smaller griefs and filled the halls
With loud laments. And he and all his kin,
He in stern silence, they with loud laments,
He with a drowning sense of vaster woes,
They cooped in narrow thoughts of narrow things,
Pined in that glowing city of the South

For Britain's mist-wreathed hills and varied skies ;
Though lodged and served right nobly, as became
Such noble captives, pined for liberty ;
Pined for the freedom of the rustic court
Held by Silurian kings in grey Trefrân,
Beside Dunraven's wood-entufted hill.

Now when the tidings of that dark defeat
And darker treachery reached the ears of Brân,
Far in the bleak wilds of the granite horn,
They shook him to the centre. He arose
And, nerved to action by the sudden stress,
Disguised his princely aspect in the weeds
Of a poor mendicant ; then, staff in hand,
Retraced his steps across the Land of Vales,
The garden of the west ; and crossed once more
The Summer-country and the tawny sea.
So after weary days that grew to weeks
Before the toilsome pilgrimage was done,
Came to the silent halls of grey Trefrân.
There lost in tearless grief he paced along
The grass-grown roadway to the ruined gate,
Once all alive with loyal multitudes.
And thence through desolate spaces, wherein once
The noblest druids, bards, and warriors

Met in high council round their nobler king.
He wandered on, still lost in tearless grief.
So through the banquet-hall, where oftentimes
The noise of feast and dance and merriment
Had made the walls and roof-tree ring again,
He passed in tearless grief. But when at length
He reached the inner chamber, once the home
Where Caradoc the husband, son, and sire
Forgot to be a soldier and a king,
He bowed his hoary head and wept his fill.
But soon the eager thirst of grief for grief
Made him uplift his eyes and gaze around
On all that was and was not, till at length
That pain was slowly quenched with greater pain.

Then rose the prince to seek the inland hills,
Where dwelt within a secret woodland hut
Cadair, his faithful hind, from whom he learned
That all was over true ; Siluria
Lay as a vassal province at the feet
Of the world's ruler ; Caradoc, betrayed,
Was borne in triumph as a thrall to Rome,
The hateful city.

But it came to pass,
As each successive note of misery

Fell on his ears and sank into his heart,
He grew the stronger. For his soul, drawn back
From her vast wanderings through the confused worlds
Of space and speculation, centred home,
And mustered all her forces for the field
Of actual and inevitable life.

Nor many days had passed, or ere, once more
In sordid weeds arrayed, he took his way
To Venta by the coast, and finding there
A vessel bound for Gaul, set sail in her,
And through the Gallic forests and flat lands
Passed with unflinching foot until he reached
The broad Rhodane, whose barges carried him
To rich Massilia's many-masted port.
Thence rudely tossed on the Tyrrhenian waves,
He came to Ostia, and at length to Rome.
And clad in all his native dignity,
Which like a rich and ample robe of state
Concealed the mean and travel-stained attire
That hung upon his stately form, he stood
In Cæsar's presence and besought of him
That Caradoc his heir, the chosen chief
Of all the Cymri, might return in peace
To Britain, while that he, his sire, remained

In Rome, a hostage for his fealty.
And Claudius seemed to listen to his suit
With favouring ears ; but many vexing forms
Hung on the wheels of action, and required
Hard proofs of most plain things. Till on a day
In the imperial presence sire and son
Met without warning ; and their mighty love,
Like a swollen torrent rising, bore them on
Into each other's arms with bursting sobs
Of joy and grief that could not be controlled,
And so the proof was plain to all the world.
Then Cæsar,—thinking thus to pacify
The wrathful people of the Western isles,
Who held his legions still at bay, or else
Out of a mere infirmity of will,—
Granted the prince's prayer, or seemed to grant.
But the court favourites, greedy for a bribe,
Hampered the prince's business ; and the king
Remained a captive still ; and his sire's heart
Grew sick with hope deferred from day to day.

Thus then it was that Brân, a British prince,
The son of Llyr, the sire of Caradoc,
Sat wrapped in sadness at Narcissus' gate.

And as he waited on the favourite,



Worn out with long delays, and still denied
By scornful menials, a stranger passed :
An aged man, who pausing near him made
Obeisance as the Easterns make and said,

“ O prince,—for all men know thou art a prince
From the far isle of Britain,—I beseech thee
Pardon thy servant. All my heart is moved
To see thee watch thus patiently in vain,
Day after day, year after year, to win
An audience of Narcissus. Verily
A tythe of all this thankless service paid
Unto the King of kings, would purchase thee
More fruitful hearing.”

“ Nay, thou knowest not,”

Brân answered him, full courteously, but yet
With just a touch of coldness in the tone ;
For though most patient of his own disgrace
It galled his heart to think his fallen estate
Should cast a slur on Britain, being linked
E'en by a casual comment with her name.

“ At my first coming I had audience
Of him thou rightly call'st the King of kings,
Though such he be not rightfully. Yea more,
Cæsar allowed my suit. But none the less

The business lingers, in the greedy hands
Of this Narcissus ; wherefore I besiege
His still reluctant doors."

Then said the man,
" Pardon ! my lord, my words were over-dark
And failed to show my meaning. Know, O prince,
I spake not of imperial Claudius ;
But of the Lord of heaven and earth, Who reigns
From everlasting on to evermore.
In Whose vast hand the kings and emperors
Are pliant tools, Whose palace-doors stand wide
In every place, Whose kingdom is a home
For sorrowing exiles scattered through the world."

At that the languid eyelids of the prince
Were lifted suddenly, as if the words
Had touched a secret in his breast.

" Yea, true,
I missed thy meaning, friend ; yet none the less
That meaning was the meaning of my life
Until misfortune drove me from the calm
Of meditation in the Cymric wilds,
And led me to this vile tumultuous place,
This seething caldron filled to the hissing brim
With cruelty and luxury. Here all thoughts

Save those of indignation and despair
Have died within me. Yet how long I watched
Those heavenly palace-doors ! but never once
Did any streak of light show them ajar,
Nor any voice reply."

" Yet God has heard,"
Broke in the stranger—" yea, and answered too,
Though thou hast thought Him deaf to thy desire.
He drew thee from the empty, voiceless wilds,
From that close gazing on the inner dark
Which burns the aching eye-balls of the soul,
But never pierces to the light beyond.
His hand has brought thee hither ; here, in Rome,
His servant waits to lead thee to His feet."

He ceased ; and Brân was silent for a space
As if he gathered up the golden words
And told them over. Then he rose from off
The clients' sordid bench, girded his robe,
Turned from Narcissus' door, and made as though
He would have joined the stranger, saying,—

" Friend,

'Tis well a man should know with whom he speaks.
Therefore I will not hide that I am Brân,
The son of Llyr, the sire of Caradoc,

Fain to become a hostage for my son.

Who then art *thou* ?”

“ My name is Julius,”

The stranger answered in an altered voice,

Saddened by nameless memories and regrets,—

“ A name of little note or novelty.

Born of the Hebrew race in Lydia,

But disallowed by all my kin and creed

For this strange crime ; that when our God vouchsafed

To grant us our desire, to hear the prayer

Which swelled for ages Judah's yearning heart,

I would not slight His gift—no less a gift

Than that Deliverer sought by kings and seers,

And found at last in Christ of Nazareth.

Wherefore, cast out by all, I came to Rome ;

Where I have dwelt three years. Many are here

Of mine own nation, driven as I have been,

From kindred, home, and country, for His sake

Who bore worse things for ours, O prince, and thine.

Others, the sons and daughters of the land,

Are joined with us. Some of great houses : more

Of the plebeian stock, but most of all

Of the disheartened slaves. Among the first

Is one of whom thou hast heard in other days,

Pomponia, wife of Aulus Plautius,
The general who aforetime held command
In Britain, ere the days when Caradoc
Rose in his strength."

"Yea ! yea !" replied the prince,
" I have heard men speak of her. A lady wrapt
In most mysterious woe, who never changed
Her mourning robe, whose hair was white with snow
That fell in summer. Some averred her grief
Grew from her childless state ; but others said
That sorrow for a dear friend put to death
Because her beauty vexed the wicked eyes
Of Messalina, gnawed upon her still.
However this might be, thus much was clear,—
That she was stricken to the hopeless heart.
Yet though so stricken that all the tears she had
Seemed but too few for her own misery,
She spared full many a precious drop for ours.
Many a captive owed his rescued life
To her kind pleadings. Many a trembling town
Was spared the cruel rifling of the troops
At her entreaties. Yet the veterans,
Though muttering curses on the general,
Had not a threat for her ; so sweet, so pure,

Were all her manners towards them."

" 'Tis most true,"

The old man answered, as with laboured breath
He overtook the eager-striding prince ;
Who, stirred as was his custom by the thought
Of generous natures and their gentle deeds,
Forgot his new companion in the theme.
— " Pomponia was all and more than all
That thou hast said ; and since those days the Lord
Has had compassion on her, drawing her
Close to Himself ; and has moreover blessed her
With a fair daughter, born in Britain, one
As wise as she is fair ; yet no less meek,—
O ! meeker far ! and far more tractable
Than softer natures ; with a heart at one
With God in all things."—

So the old man spoke

And sighed in speaking, as a father sighs,
Who numbers up the lovely qualities
Of a dear, dying child. And then he paused,
And when he spoke again, his words recurred
To the first theme :—

" It seems Pomponia's grief
Grew from a deeper root than childlessness ;

For though less wild and bitter than in days
Of heathen gloom, it hangs about her still,
And mars perchance the meaning of her life
To her impatient lord."

"All this I heard
By common rumour," said the prince, "and more
Was told me by my faithful herdsman's wife,
The daughter of a servant of our house ;
Who, taken captive as a little maid,
Had served Pomponia many happy years
Within the alien camp, set free by her
When she returned to Rome. Estrildis spake
Of some new worship, pure and spiritual
Beyond all other worships of the world,
Which her dear lady practised, and the which
Herself had learned to love. A worship paid,
By a new life of holy thoughts and deeds
And solemn prayers and praises, to one God,
Revealed in him of whom thou spak'st anon,
Jesus the Christ ; but wherefore called the Christ,
I know not."

Then the other was not slow
To answer fittingly, with words that met
The faithful witness in the prince's soul,

And ended thus :—

“ This faith whereof I speak
Is no new thing, but eldest born of all :
The truth whereof the rest are counterfeits.
These base their shadowy fabrics on the sands,
The shifting conscience of the varying race,
Whereon arise, to glitter for a day,
Frail shrines of worship paid to fancied powers :
Shrines open only to a favoured few.
This, like a city founded on a rock,—
The home of generations passed away,
The home of generations yet to come,—
Rests on the deep foundations of the past,
The solid substance of the storied years
That slowly settle from the thoughts of God.
And in her temple-courts and round about
Her fragrant altars, all the tribes of men ;—
The Greek, the Jew ; the unshorn, the civilized ;
The bond, the free ; the simple, and the sage ;—
Are welcome ; and her choicest mysteries
She opens to the meekest of the earth.”

Thus speaking, Julius led the thoughtful prince ;
Leaving the broad streets and the dazzling domes ;
The temples, columns, statues ; leaving too

The flowery, fragrant gardens ; till they came
By ever-narrowing ways to Julius' home :
A humble lodging by the Tiber's side ;
Whose waters, ever rushing by the wall,
Subdued the strife and clangour of the town.

And here with quiet modesty, unspoiled
By any false shame for his mean abode,
He bade the prince be welcome, while he spread
His best upon the board. Then, after meat,
They sat and talked until the air grew dim :
Until the lights on the opposing shore
Streamed out their long reflections on the stream :
Until a glory never to be quenched
Broke on the soul of Brân.

At length he rose

And laid his arms about the old man's neck,
In kind farewell, and passed into the street.
And threading now the ever-widening ways,
Through less and less of sordid on to more
And ever more of sumptuous, he reached
The temples and the palaces again,
Where columns, arches, statues, stood aloft
In glittering moonlight, amidst gardens sunk
In depths of fragrant shade. Yet every step,

From that poor chamber by the river side
Towards this central splendour, seemed to him
To bear him farther from magnificence
Nearer to meanness. And when last he reached
The palace on the Palatine, assigned
By Claudius to the royal hostages,
The small and plaintive questions of the queen,
The wife of Caradoc his son,—whose heart,
Loving, but ever fretful in its love,
Mishave her, that his lingering meant mishap
To her or her's or him,—fell on his ears,
Though seasoned to such sounds, as something strange,
Something most needless and most pitiful.
For were not all his goings and returns
Guarded divinely? was not every thread
Of all the tangled interests of his house
Held smooth by hands kinder than kindest hands
Of fabled fate? And yet he answered her
With meeker patience than his wont (though Brân
Was ever famed for patience); for his soul
Had risen into the higher calm which stills
All angry pulses. Thus his prayer was heard;
And thus his eyes, long faithful in the dark,
Found at the last they had not watched in vain.

Soon as the morning broke the prince arose
Alert and strong, as if a second youth
Quickened his veins ; and through the silent streets
He bent his steps again to Julius' home.

There scarcely had he entered and received
The old man's welcome, when a hurried knock
Startled the door, which opening instantly,
Ere Julius could reply,—a fair young girl,—
Half child, half woman,—all her delicate face
Flushing with eagerness, all her features strung
To some set purpose,—sprang into the room.
Her bearing had a wild and sylvan grace
That seemed most strange in one whose raiment spoke
Of noble lineage. For her tunic, woven
Of finest Syrian wool, bleached by the dews
Of summer nights upon the emerald plains
That frame Damascus, was all bordered round
With Tyrian purple ; and was looped above
On each fair shoulder with a gleaming pearl,
Large as a linnet's egg ; and over this
Hung loosely draped about her slender form
A robe of equal richness ; and her hair,—
Crisp, golden hair that ran in rippled waves
Back from her rounded temples,—flowed behind

Into a silken network, strung as thick
With pearls as autumn gossamers with dew ;
Her very feet, that trod the homely floor
With such a dainty firmness, were encased
In shoes of creamy kid skin, rough with pearls.

No sooner was her hasty entrance made
Than seeing Brân, she started and drew back
Half timidly ; yet with her gaze still fixed
Upon his face, with a child's look of keen
Unconscious scrutiny.

“ Fear not, my child,”

Said Julius, rising with a tremulous haste
And laying softly on her sunny head
One wrinkled hand in blessing ; while she kissed
Its fellow, lifting it up reverently
With her long fingers. “ Fear not, Claudia,
This stranger will not harm thee, nor betray
Thy coming.”

Then he turned him to the prince,
Saying,—“ This maid is she of whom I spake :
The child of Plautius and Pomponia.”
And Brân kept gazing on her tender face
As if it held a mystery ; while he heard,
As in a dream, the voice of Julius say,

“Alas! my daughter, wherefore art thou come?
For though my banished heart yearns after thee,
Dear one, as well thou knowest, none the less
I tremble that thou thus shouldst disobey
Thy sire’s commandment.”

“Nay, my master dear,”


Answered the maiden, with a sudden flash
Of indignation,—“never adjure me more
By any father’s claim from Plautius.
He never gave me any father’s love,
Only a mockery of a father’s pride.
And now I know it;—my dim guess is true:
Plautius is not my father; nay no more
The sire of Claudia than this stranger here
Is Claudia’s grandsire.”

“Peace, my child,” in haste

Julius broke in, “I charge thee, listen not
To this slaves’ gossip.”

“Nay, my father dear,”

She answered, tempering her passionate voice
To meekness, “only hear, and thou wilt own
That this is no slaves’ gossip. Yesternight,
Pomponia,—she whom I will ever call
My mother; who has won the name by more




Than mother's love and mother's sorrow too :—
Thrown from her guard by grief that Plautius
Refused her prayer to bear me company
At a gay festival, wherein she knew
I should be sore bested,—let fall a word
Which told me that my guess had touched the truth.
No : I am not their child."

" Even were this so,"

Said Julius, striving to discern the right,
Yet baffled still; so that his words became
Feeble and void of faith :—" He is thy sire
In the law's sight, and thou art bound to heed
All his commands. Unless that he command
To disobey thy God. Then, not till then,
The bond gives way before the greater bond.
But let that pass : surely thou hast not braved
His anger, merely thus to tell me this,
That thou art not his child ? "

" Nay, surely nay,"

She answered with a pretty shamefaced smile,
Which faded quickly, as her features took
An air of settled purpose once again,
" I come to warn thee of a fearful snare.
Alas ! my father, never, never more



Can any dear occasion come to me
Of disobeying Plantius for thy sake.
Or rather for His dear sake Whose thou art,
And Whom thou servest; Whose I also am
And Whom I fain would serve. Listen to me,
And little Claudia like the fabled mouse
May free the lion from the hunter's toils.
Before thou camest to Rome, four years ago,
The emperor, incensed by rebel deeds
Of certain lawless Jews, and with his fears
Wrought on by favourites, issued a decree
That every Jew and every proselyte
Should quit the city and the lands of Rome.
I was a child and scarcely read aright
The meaning of their grief; but as I looked .
From our high palace windows on the bands
Of plundered exiles hastening to the gates,
And saw the sorrow and dismay that sat
On every face, I wept aloud with them,
And angered Plantius. With them went, they say,
Many who owned the Christ and worshipped Him.
Now since those days, amidst the cruel strifes
And ever-growing licence of the times,
This old decree against your tribe has fallen

Into forgetfulness. And some have crept
Back to their homes ; and others, knowing not
Of such a law, have come to Rome from far,
As thou, my father. So for a brief while
All has seemed safe. But now the courtiers,
Sated with softer wickedness and fain
To try the taste of blood, have plied the ears
Of the dull emperor with a false report
Of some conspiracy among your tribe.
This very night, at sunset, all your homes
Will be beset and every soul be slain.
Such is their fiendish scheme.

“ But God is good ;

And yesternight I, forced by Plautius
To join this banquet, overheard them talk ;
Such talk as curdled up my blood to hear.
But oh, what fervent thanks flew from my heart
Up to the Lord Almighty, who refused
My prayer to save me from that riotous scene
That He might grant my greater prayer : to save
Thee, O my father, and thy people too
From the fell heathen.”

Here her voice gave way
And suddenly, before she was aware,

Changed to a sob ; but pressing her fair hands
Hard on her heaving breast, she wrestled down
The rising passion, calmed herself, and stood
As meek before him as a three years' child,
Waiting his answer. But he, all amazed
By this unlooked-for stroke, and tossed about
By many currents of suggestion,
Kept troubled silence.

Then he thought :—" Perchance,—
Nay doubtless,—they have played upon her fears ;
For this thing cannot be : " then spake aloud,
" Tell me, my child, their very words and looks.
Who spoke the first ? who followed ? "

" I will tell

As clearly and as truly as I can,"
She answered him, and girt her eager soul
With patience ;—" but, my father, while we speak
The precious moments fly, moments at most
Too few to spread the warning.

" Thus it was :—

Last night, as I have said, did Plautius feast
Three of his chosen friends, mere boys to him ;
For lately he has seemed to honour such
More than his grey compeers. One of the three

Was Martialis, of the Spanish race,
Of a most witty and most wanton tongue,
For ever stringing all things in the world
On slender threads of epigram. With him
Came his compatriot and fellow poet,
Lucanus ; of a grave and modest mien,
But with an eye to shrink from. And the third
Was Pudens, of the order of the knights.”
Now when she named that name the maiden blushed
And faltered for a moment ; at the which
The old man sighed, as at a token fraught
With danger to his darling.

Then Prince Brân
Discerning that his presence checked her speech,
Arose and stood apart a little space
Beside a windowed opening in the wall ;
And, looking on the stream, his busy thoughts
Flowed faster than the current of the stream.
“ Thus, ever thus,” he mused, “ the tide of life
Flows on without a pause. Scarce have I met
The man of all the world who meets my soul,—
Who has the message ready on his lips
Which I have listened for so long in vain,—
Ere the remorseless current sweeping on

Bears him beyond my reach. But if the tale
The maiden tells be true, and he must quit
This murderous city,—whither shall he go?—
Ay, wherefore not to Britain? Many ears,
Half opened by the wisdom of the bards,
Await the message there, and many souls
Are sick to death of sin. Ay, let him go.”
So mused the prince, watching the stream. Meanwhile
The maiden meekly stood by Julius
With folded hands, as if her mind were set
To say a weary task. And thus she spake:—

“ And Plautius commanded me to bid
Four ladies to the feast, daughters of four
Of the great houses. So they came in state.
Haughty and vain they looked ; their scented locks
Made the air heavy, and their gorgeous robes
Trailed on the floor, tangling my feet, whereat
They frowned as if the injury were theirs.
O how my heart longed for Pomponia,
My only mother, to be near me then ;
I felt so shelterless and so alone.
But she was shut by Plautius’ stern command
Within a distant chamber ; never since
That dreadful day when she was tried by all

Her gathered kindred, tried for life and fame,—
Save in his presence, may I speak with her.
I will not weary thee, telling the talk
That wearied me. At length the purple folds
That hung between us and the central hall
Were drawn aside by slaves, all crowned with flowers,
Revealing us to Plantius and his guests ;
Who greeted us full courteously, and begged
Of Plantius that the banquet might be graced
By our fair presence. So we passed along
To supper, marshalled by the bowing slaves.
My four companions soon reclined at ease
Beside the youths upon the couches placed
Around the board ; but Plantius, kind for once,
With some rough joke about my childish ways
Bade me be seated at his feet. Four hours,
Four endless hours, the feast crept slowly on
From costly course to course, with frivolous talk
And wanton songs between ; and ever more
When in these wanton songs there came a line
More dull, or more unmeaning than the rest,
It seemed to take the hearers' fancy most.
And then at every pause,—wine, wine, still wine,
Of every varied vintage of the South,

Flowing at every turn ; until at length
These high-born women, most unwomanly,
Grew flushed and looked so strangely with their eyes
It vexed my soul to see them. And methinks
That Pudens read my discontent, and wished
To shield it by a pretext from the eyes
Of Plautius, lest he should be angered by it ;
For with a smiling face he turned and said,
' Thy gentle daughter, sir, is scarcely ripe
For these late feasts. See ! sleep hangs in her eyes,'
And would have spoken more ;—but Plautius
Rose on his elbow with a sudden rage
Glaring upon me, as my furtive looks
Glanced towards the door, so much I longed to fly,—
And whispered fiercely in my startled ear,—
' Beware ! for any rash discourtesy
To me or to my guests shall be repaid
With bloody interest to thy baseborn friends,
Julius and all his tribe.'

“ And these his words
Were caught by the quick ears of Julia
Who lay beside him on the lower couch ;
For straight she lisped to him, while all the time
Her cruel smiles flashed sideways at my face,

‘ Ah, my good lord, by this same hour to-morrow
Thy threat to Claudia will have lost its point ;
For not a soul of all her chosen friends,
Search where thou wilt, will then be found alive,
To suffer thy just vengeance.’

“ ‘ How ? what meanest thou ? ’

Said Plautius sternly. ‘ Claudius has no heart
To plan a sweeping clearance such as this,
Without the prompting of his favourites,
Without the knowledge of his generals,
And naught has reached my ears.’

“ ‘ May be, my lord,’

She answered ; ‘ for he fears to tell it thee,
Lest it should leak abroad ; for all the world
Knows that the ladies of thy house are pledged
To these vile Hebrews.’

“ At that Plautius’ brow
Grew sterner still—‘ Be careful of thy tongue,’
He muttered, ‘ speaking of my wife and child : ’
Then louder, ‘ Tell me how it came to pass.’

“ ‘ Most easily,’ she answered with a laugh.
‘ We of the court were weary of our lives
For want of some new zest. This Agrippina
Weighs on us all like lead :—no life—no play—

But a mere plodding merchant, counting gains
Of power from week to week. Her predecessor
Perchance did carry things a little far,
At least she was imprudent. But the court
Was twenty times more lively in her time ;
Or so they say,—of course the thing is far
Beyond *my* memory'—

“ —here incautiously
Fanning her false face with an ostrich plume
On which the slaves had sprinkled essences,
The moistened feather swept the red away
From half her withered cheek. But knowing not,
She babbled on :—

“ ‘Of course the thing is far
Beyond *my* memory, being a mere child
When Messalina fell. But as I said,
We all were fit to die of weariness,
And therefore planned a pleasant tragedy
To stir our blood. We told the emperor
That his decree of exile 'gainst the Jews
Was disregarded, many had returned,
And some had never gone ; and all were bound
With the house-slaves in a conspiracy,
Spread like a network underneath our feet

Throughout the length and breadth of Rome, to rise
And slaughter him and his and all of us,
And overthrow the empire.'

" Here she paused
To lift the wine-cup to her lips, and then
I heard Lucanus whisper under breath
To Martialis,—

" ' Curse the woman's tongue !
' Spoiling our sport ! now Claudia without doubt
Will warn the game.'

" But Julia did not hear
Or did not heed,—

" ' Anything in the world,'—
So she went on, ' the merest lumber, placed
Upon the groove of fear, slides swift and sure
Into the brain of Claudius. Thus, you see,
Our little tragedy was soon arranged.
Those of the actors who had need to learn
Their parts are well instructed ;—for the rest,
Theirs will be better played in ignorance.'
And here she laughed again, and glanced at me
In cruel triumph :—adding, ' As I said,
By this same hour to-morrow not a soul
Of pretty Claudia's strangely chosen friends

Will be forthcoming. Sunset is the time
Given to the guards.' ”

Here Claudia ceased and drew
A choking breath. And Julius said, “ Enough,”
And rose up quickly, while with shaking hands
He girt his robe :—“ Enough, O God ! I see
The fearful tale is over true ;—but how
Hast thou escaped to tell it ? ”

“ I scarce know,
Myself,” she answered : “ Thanks to Him whose hand
Guides the most stubborn evils to good ends,
As wilder waxed the revel, Plantius ceased
To note me further ;—so I ventured forth
And found the fresh morn breaking purely down
Through the sky-centre of the outer hall.
Then with my faithful nurse, who waits without,
I left the palace. But the time flies on ;
And thou must hasten forth from house to house
To warn thy people. I too must be gone. ;
But, O ! it almost breaks my heart to think
That I may never see thy face again,
Nor hear thy voice. The lessons of the Lord
May come to me, I know, by other lips,
Or even be taught in silence ; yet I fear

They will seem hard, and I shall grow perverse,
And fail to learn them. Ah ! thou knowest not
What hateful snares are spread about my feet.
And, O my father,—scorn not thy poor child—
The worst is this ; they do not always seem .
Hateful to all my heart. O lift me up
On thy strong hands of prayer,—as thou would'st lift
A drowning creature from the weltering waves ! ”

Then Julius wrung her hands and wept aloud :
And bade her trust in God and watch her heart
As she would watch a treacherous enemy ;
And bade her stay her soul upon the thought
That the kind Christ was near her evermore,
That when the foe pressed closest, He would be
Yet closer. So with many sighs and tears
And prayers, they parted. But ere she passed
Through the dark door, she turned, and stood therein
Like a fair statue in a gloomy niche.
Her face subdued into a solemn calm
While all her form dilated with the thought
That swelled her soul. And Brân who had stepped
forth
To give her salutation ere she went
Heard her last words :


“ My father, ere I go,
Not knowing what betides me where I go,
I have a last request to make of thee :
Grant it as thou would'st grant it, were it made
By dying lips, sealed by beseeching looks
In dying eyes. Thou knowest I was born
In Britain : doubtless of the British race.
I treasure many a dim remembrance still
Of fair green meadows, russet forest-paths,
And cooler skies than these ; and looks of love
That hung above my cradle, ere I dwelt
With Plantius and Pomponia in the camp.
Voices and visions haunt me in the night
Re-echoed from some far-off place and time.
My heart is bound so close to that dear land
That all her woes are mine, and make me feel
As if my mother wept and cried to me,
Calling across the melancholy seas.
But I—I cannot answer or return.
Wilt not thou go, my father ? when thou camest
From Lydia's shore, thy course was like the sun
From east to west ; and now that thou art driven
From hence, be like the gracious sun once more :
Still further westward bear the blessed light,

Even to the islands of the utmost sea,—
To Britain. 'Tis my last request. Farewell."

So she passed out, not waiting for reply ;
While Brân took up his staff to follow her,
Saying to Julius, " Hearken to her words.
For be assured the wisdom of the gods,
The wisdom of the God of gods is there.
The thoughts she uttered were the very thoughts
That held me as I watched the rolling stream.
I go to guard her steps, unseen by her ;
For by this time the city is abroad,
And dangers may beset her. There's a look
In her deep violet eyes that brings to mind
One whom I lost long since, my eldest born,
Slain in the last fight of my sire, King Llyr.
Ere noon I will return."


And so the prince

Departed, following Claudia and the nurse
At distance silently. At first it seemed
A needless care ; for every street was still
And empty ; scarce a shutter was withdrawn
In all the lazy city. Here and there
A swarthy peasant, singing merrily,
Bound for the market-place with fruits and flowers,




From some green-nested hamlet in the hills,—
Would pass them, check his song, and turn to gaze
At Claudia's beauty, only half concealed
By her light veil ;—then shake his simple head
In sad rebuke, and go upon his way,
With careful thoughts about his girls at home.

But as they neared the house of Plautius
A band of drunken revellers noisily
Burst from Narcissus' palace-gates hard by,
Ready and ripe for mischief ; and forthwith
They, seeing Claudia, but through wine-dulled eyes,
That saw not she was Claudia, with a shout
Reeled after her and caught her by the veil.
Whereat she flung it off, and stood erect,
Like an indignant queen, and cried aloud,—
“ Stand back ! Methinks ye know not who I am.”
At which they stared upon her, and two fled,
Muttering, “ By Venus' eyelids, 'tis the child
Of the old general, Plautius. Let us begone ! ”
While other two, past reason, mad with wine,
Pressed hard upon her and the shrieking nurse.
But ere their vile hands touched her—for the nurse
Had thrust her 'gainst the wall, and stood before,
To guard her darling, as the wild cat guards



Her young one,—Brân was on them unawares.
His vigorous age had left his sinews sound.
He would not honour them, such dogs as these,
With buffets of his princely hand ; but wound
A long, strong arm about the waist of each,
And tore them up and hurled them to the earth
Without a word ; and left them grovelling there
Like trodden worms.

Then Claudia, who had held
Her head so high in peril, voice so firm,
Finding the peril safely overpast,
Trembled like any leaf, ready to swoon ;
And dared not speak her thanks, lest the great sobs
That struggled in her throat should reach her lips.
Therefore, she only lifted grateful eyes
Upon the aged prince, who took her hand,
And led her gently to her father's door.
There parted from her, saying, “ My fair child,
I heard thee speak anon to Julius
Of that dear island whose dishonoured name
I cannot breathe in Rome. And thou didst speak
As if thou lovest it : therefore, let this love
Be henceforth as a bond between us two.
I love that dear land next to my own soul,




And hate her foes next to the evil powers.
Should any rumour reach thy father's ears
Of this encounter, tell him that Prince Brân,
The son of Llyr, the sire of Caradoc,
Has now avenged himself and all his house
Upon him, rescuing his only child."
So turned and went ; while she, with grateful eyes
Shining upon him through her unfallen tears,
Stood on the topmost marble step and watched
His stately form diminish and grow pale
Along the lessening street.

Meanwhile the slave
Who kept the gate—one with her in the faith,
And guessing of her mission by the talk
That passed among his fellows yesternight,—
Brought by a secret signal from the nurse,
Gave them safe entrance ;—saying, as she passed,
“ Christ's blessing rest upon thy golden head,
Dear lady, dearest child ;—and as to-night
Thou hast braved many perils for the sake
Of those He loves, so through the darker night
That stretches on until He shine again
In everlasting morning on the world,—
May His good angels have a charge to keep

Thy tender feet in all their doubtful ways.”
So with the blessing of the poor and meek
Warm at her heart, she passed into the house ;
And sought her little chamber, where she fell
Upon her knees before the unseen Shrine
That faithful hearts find everywhere ; and strove
In wordless agonies of prayer ; and poured
Her soul in praise for rescue, safe return,
And a new friend. At length, arising up
With looks of full contentment, like a babe
Slow-turning from his mother’s liberal breast,—
Summoned the nurse and gladly laid aside
Her festal draperies and ornaments.
Then, clad in simple homespun, sat her down,
Distaff in hand,—and thought within herself,
“ Here will I sit and spin and sing the while,
And through the open window shall my song
Rise to Pomponia in her lonely room.
Which does she love the best ? Methinks it is
That pretty little song that Seneca,
Prince Nero’s tutor, made for me last year,
When I lamented for the good old times.
For though the heathen gods are named in it,
’Tis sure an innocent song ; and I can think,

Stead of Minerva, of the mighty One
Named in the sacred books of Julius,
The everlasting Wisdom, whom of old,
In the beginning of His wondrous ways,
The Lord, the God of heaven and earth, possessed.
And where the words fall short of revealed truths
In these last favoured days, my inward thought,
Can shoot beyond them to a better aim."
And so she sat and span and sung the while.

“ Set within the gorgeous gloom
Of a purple-lined room,
Like a jewel in its case,
Pearly robes and pearly face,
And all along a cushioned couch reclined at ease,
Mused Valeria fair and young,
Sadly mused and sadly sung.
' Oh ! I would my lot were cast
In the grand days that are past ;
Their nobler manners better far my fancy please :
When the matrons of old Rome
Wrought amidst their maids at home ;
When their distaffs, deftly twirled,
Span the conquest of the world.'



So she sang a little space ;
But the meaning of her face
Grew all dim and drowsy soon,
With the languid afternoon :
Her eyelids drooped with slumber and the music died.
Then, the while she slept, behold
A Minerva, wrought in gold,
Seemed to leave the silver shrine
Freshly served with flowers and wine,
And floated without footsteps slowly to her side.
There, dilated large and fair,
Breathed these words upon the air :—
' Let thy distaff, deftly twirled,
Spin the conquest of the world.'

“ ‘ Lo ! thy favoured hands are full
Of a softer, whiter wool
Than the gods have e'er before
Lavished from their boundless store.
Rise ! spin a finer thread to clothe a daintier age.
Let the father, husband, son,
Shine in raiment thou hast spun :
Self-denial, purity,
Learned at home and learned of thee,
So shall they pass with plaudits from the widened stage

Spin them girdles broad and fine :
Truth and justice learned from thine.
So thy distaff, deftly twirled,
Spins the conquest of the world.' "

Now, as she sang, and after through the day,
While with a habit half mechanical,
She went about her daily ministries,—
Those unobserved achievements, which if left
Undone, would ruin all the house with wrong,—
Though well persuaded that the fear was vain,
A dreadful fear would seize her suddenly ;
So that her heart stopped beating, and she longed
To rush into the streets and cry aloud,
To warn the chosen people of the doom
That waited them at sunset. Yet, again,
Knowing that what was laid on her to do
She had done faithfully ; she calmed herself
And left the issue in the unseen Hand.

While thus she lived her anxious hours at home,
Prince Brân and Julius went abroad through all
The dazzling length and breadth of Rome, and
urged
The Jews to instant flight. Then all the few,
Who owned that Jesus was the Christ, arose

And fled with haste by twos and threes, and left
The bloody city, by all gates. Some hid
In the disguise of peasants. Some with wares
As travelling merchants. Here a brave man, pierced
To the heart's quick with agonizing fears
For those more dear to him than life itself,
Attired his face with harsh, tyrannic looks,
Driving his trembling wife and babes before,
As a slave dealer. So, by God's good hand,
Some in disguise, some openly, they passed
In safety. While the unbelieving Jews,
Judging the heart of Julius by their own,
Would heed no warning given by such as he ;
Who cast their old traditions to the winds,
And in a fashion, new, heretical,
Worshipped their fathers' God. These loudly praised
Their own sharp wit that saw his subtle aim
To dispossess them of the synagogue :
Shut all their gates upon him, stayed behind,
And perished miserably.

Yet one of these,

Aristobŭlus, of the royal race
Of Maccabæus, listened and believed.
And bore his dark-eyed Miriam and their babes

On some pretext of summer holiday,
In a gay pleasure-galley down the stream
To Ostia, where his favourite villa stood
On a green island southward of the port.

Now as the galley glided down the stream,
It passed the humble lodging by the shore
Where Julius dwelt ; and through the window came
The mournful chanting of a Hebrew psalm.


“ Deliver me, my God ! deliver me
From those that rise against me.” And the throng
Of full-toned vowels rolling down the air
Melted the proud heart of the Maccabee
To thoughts of brotherhood ; so giving charge
To steer the galley to the wall, he bade
The rowers pause ; then standing at full height,
He called aloud—

“ O man of God ! come down.

The sun is low already, and the gates
Are far for weary limbs. Come down and speed
With us to Ostia.” And Julius heard.
As weary to the death with the long toil
Of that most mournful day, and sick at heart
To think how many of his stiffnecked race
Refused to flee,—he slowly moved about,

Filling his scrip, preparing to depart ;
But almost praying that his feet might fail
To bear him forth : so much to be desired
Seemed a quick entrance into life, though won
By the most cruel death. But when he heard
This friendly voice that in the Hebrew tongue
Called from the river, all his mind was changed
And opened kindly to the nearer warmth.
Therefore he looked forth gratefully and knew
The Maccabee, and swift-descending came
On board the galley.

Now when they had rowed
Two furlongs' length beyond the city walls,
The ominous sun sank down as red as blood,
Behind a black-barred vapour far to sea.
The crimson on the ripples faded out ;
The flush upon the cloudlets overhead
Died in a moment ; and the fiery glow
That lit the city's smoky canopy
Went out in darkness, as the light goes out
From an extinguished torch. Then at that sign,
Without a word, the rowers ceased their strokes
And pale with dreadful expectation stayed
The drifting galley on the ashy stream,



With backward oars. While all on board of her
Listened in breathless silence.

Soon, too soon,
The noise of sudden tumult shook the air,
Borne down the echoing water. Mocking shouts,
Shrieks of despair, and rush of rapid feet
In timid flight or fierce pursuit ; and cries
For mercy, shortened by the cruel sword ;
All these were there, and all by distance blent
To ghastly harmony ; but not a clash
Of meeting weapons : for the slaughter fell
Upon defenceless households, gathering
For evening prayer. Then Miriam clasped her babes
So closely to her straining breast, they woke
And wailed aloud ; and at the tender sound
Her dry-eyed horror melted into tears.
But Julius and the noble Maccabee
Flung themselves prostrate on the deck and cried
Within their stricken hearts—" How long, O Lord !
" How long, shall bloody and unrighteous men
Afflict thy heritage ? "

At last the fear
Of overtaking night compelled them on :
The oars fell sadly in the darkening stream,

And bore them downwards to the port, and thence
To the green island.

There did Julius dwell
For many days, preaching to all the house
That Jesus was the Christ. His noble host
Heard him in troubled silence for a while,
Distracted by strange thoughts ; then suddenly
A light shone round his spirit, like the light
That flashed on Saul of Tarsus ; and a face
Looked forth upon him from the spirit-sphere
That bathes us all about, and smote him down
With sudden splendour to the earth, and turned
The purpose of his life.

Then, fired with zeal
To spread the conquests of the Crucified,
He sailed with Julius for the land to which
The last request of Claudia pointed them :
The island of the West, beloved by Brán.
But ere they sailed, they both adventured them
To Rome once more, finding a safe retreat
Within the palace on the Palatine,
Where dwelt the British captives. For the guard,
Won by the noble bearing of the king
And of the prince his father, and some bound

By common faith to Brân, were slow to vex
Their royal charge by prying in their ways ;
And for the most part closed their ears and eyes
To such as came and went. So these two men
Dwelt safely in the palace, practising
The Cymric customs and the Cymric tongue.
And in those days Brân and the Maccabee
Passed through the mystic waters, and received
The holy symbols of the feast of Christ.
And ere the pilgrims parted, Caradoc,
Though caring little for their faith, became
Their fast and fervent friend ; and when they went,
Gave them his signet ring : a talisman
Potent to charm the eyes and win the hearts
Of all the Cymri.

So at length they sailed
For the far West, ordained by holy hands ;
While Claudia's ceaseless prayers smoothed all their
paths
Over strange lands and seas. Meanwhile the snares
Grew thicker round her feet. For Plautius,
Having betrothed her in her earliest years
To Pudens of the order of the knights
(Whom Claudia would not, since he scorned her God),

Strove by all means, or fair or foul, to bend
Her holy purpose to his heathen will.
Therefore she dwelt in sorrow and in fear
Almost alone ; or, worse than loneliness,
Compassed by vain companions. When at times
She saw Pomponia at the daily board,
Speech was forbidden them. Thus, but for One
Who still is nearest to the loneliest,
Her heart had almost broken, or her steps
Had well-nigh slipped. And Julius mourned for her
As one who mourns an only, darling child,
Dying unsuccoured on a distant shore.



PART II.

THEY sailed from Ostia, whence their galley, vexed
By varying fortunes of the autumn seas,
Coasted the Tuscan and Ligurian shores,
Far as Massilia's many-masted port.
Thence in rude barges slowly toiling up
The broad Rhodanus, after many days
They reached the heart of Gaul; and so at length
By weary marches through dim forest tracts
And wide monotony of grassy plains,—
With here and there a vineyard trellising
The sunny slopes,—they gained the Liger's banks,
Whose westering current bore them to the coast,
Washed by the waters of the unknown sea.

Here, after brief delay, they found a ship
Bound for Siluria with a freight of bards
From Carnâk on the upper coast : of old
A vast Druidic Temple of the Sun,
Winding its serpent-train o'er hill and dale ;
But now, when all the Druids of the land
Were banished by the Roman, only used
For lyric tourneys.

Therefore in this bark
Did Julius and the noble Maccabee
Take shipping ; and for many stormy days
Coasting by Gaul, then beating slow across
The channel currents, hardly reached at length
The headlands of the hornèd land. From whence,
Doubling the granite capes, the vessel turned
With favouring winds along the tawny sea.
So, gently borne between the Cymric hills,
At moonset on the seventh night she gained
The offing of the old Silurian port,
And dropped her anchors, waiting for the day.

Now, as it chanced, at earliest dawn a chief,
Cynfrân by name, was passing on the cliffs,
And paused to watch with melancholy eyes
The breaking of the day. He saw the sun

At first peer dimly through the mists that hid
The sleeping sea. He saw the sea by slow
And soft degrees shake off the steely hues
Of the cold dawn, while diamond sparkles flashed,
Faded and flashed again, on rippled lines.
Then broader levels shone with steadier beams,
And wet rocks glittered. Last, the brooding mist
Spread its grey wings and fled, and all the bay
Laughed to the laughing sky. At which the chief
But looked more sad, as one who says within,
“ Day follows night for all the world but me,
And sunrise drinks the tears of all save me.”

As thus he gazed and mused, a distant hail
Came sliding on the surface of the sea,
Small as a voice that whispers close at hand ;
Then hearing this, he rested on his spear,
Searching the clouded margin of the bay
With falcon eyes. And soon he spied far off
A shining speck, which, as the horizon cleared,
Became a vessel anchored motionless
Above her painted image, waiting there
For pilotage. But when he saw the bark,
Whose gilded prow spoke her an alien,
And saw too how with such an arrogant ease

She sat upon the subject bay, his brows
Met in black wrath.

“ O, for a thousand arms ! ”

He cried aloud,—unconscious of the swell
Of his barbaric phrase, shaking his spear,—
“ To hurl without a pause their vengeful darts
Full in the insolent invader’s face.

Alas ! Siluria’s bravest hearts are cold,
Fallen are her heroes, and their mangled limbs
Lie heaped in hasty graves beside the shores
Of the sad Sabren, mourning night and day
In oozy channels, which the ocean tides
Flush to o’erflowing with unneedful tears.


Our Caradoc, betrayed by treacherous hands,
Now bows his head, stripped of its royal wreath
Beneath a dungeon-roof far off in Rome,
The hateful, envious city.—What of this ?
It is not this which gnaws me to the heart ;
And I but mock myself, feigning to chafe
At general woes. The over-crowded griefs
That fill the land with groans are trifles, weighed
With that one voiceless woe which slaughtered
thee,

O Angharad, my only love ! Even now

The Cymri may shake off the alien yoke,
Our Caradoc may yet again be king,
But not the gods themselves can right thy wrongs.
Yet though gods cannot right them, I, a man,
May well avenge them ; and through many a year
Have I avenged them well, and better yet
Will I avenge them ere this day be done."

At that the chieftain turned his course and dropped
Upon the levels of the western marsh
By stealthy paths.

Meanwhile upon the prow
Gathered an eager group of voyagers
To watch the clearing coast. And all unmarked
Among them stood the pilgrims : simple men
Encumbered by no shows of power, but yet
Bearing a seed whose overmastering growth
Should fill the world. In bardic legends still
Their names survive, but changed by lapse of years
To *Ilid* and *Arwystli*, barbarous sounds
That strive to copy in the Cymric tongue
The graceful Greek. As Julius gazed he grew
Silent with many thoughts amidst the hum
Of eager voices. For as one by one
The features of the land revealed themselves,



He travelled back a thousand storied years,
And saw the splendid king, King Solomon,
On Israel's throne. He saw the ships of Tyre
Cross the Great Sea and thread the pillared straits,
And plunging thence athwart the unknown deeps
That wash the utmost border of the world,
Turn their bold prows to face the stormy North,
Seeking the metals of these distant isles
Wherewith to deck the temple. There his thought
Dwelt for a moment, ere with swift recoil,
Like a spent wave, it swallowed up itself
In musings on the miserable change
Since those proud times. And then as a white cliff
Gleamed from a sombre headland, swathed in mist,
A thrill ran through him, and a passing flush
Kindled the worn lines of his thoughtful face ;
For in that snow-white cliff his fancy found
Claudia all clad in pureness ; in its feet,
Fast rooted in the waves, her lonely faith
Standing in no calm waters like to these,
But in an ever-seething, stormy sea
Of fierce temptation ; yet still building up
A rampart of inviolable prayers
Around her fellows and the land she loved.


As thus he mused, with glittering eyes full fixed
Upon the nearing shore, the Maccabee
Marvelled what ailed the man. For Julius thought
His thoughts in silence ; silence known as well
To calmly tender friendships of the soul
As to her passionate loves. For who that feels
The fine, delightful sense of oneness thrill
His raptured heart, and is not loth to trust
The ears of casual comrades with the rare
And precious treasure of a friend's deserts ?
Who is not jealous of the thing he loves,
And prone to hide it in a secret place,
And tremble when another passes near ?

But while the Maccabee was marvelling,
The bards had left the tent upon the deck,—
Where through the voyage they had held themselves
Aloof from common contact,—and now stood
Shoulder to shoulder with the gazing crowd.
And seeing this, and being one who loved
Rather to speak than ponder, being too
Full charged with that gregarious warmth of heart
Which gushes now in streams of graciousness
And now outpours itself in vials of wrath ;—
And being therefore prone, as such are prone,

To seize occasion by the throat and claim
An instant payment of success,—he turned
To speak with them ; and chiefly with a youth
Who wore a many-coloured robe and held
A wand as gaily-tinted, while a harp
Hung on his drooping shoulder. To this youth
The Maccabee began to give himself
In question and reply. Until the youth,
Being courteous and perchance a little vain,
Opened his heart in answer, telling him
He was a novice in the Sacred Schools,
Slow-training in the unwritten Druid-lore.
Told him, moreover, Llarian was his name ;
That all the strength of all his soul was vowed
To wisdom and to beauty ; that each sense
And every inward faculty wherewith
The unseen Powers had blessed him, he had bent
To disentwine the master-key that rings
Through all the discords and the harmonies
Of nature and of man, and, having found,
To tune his life therewith in just accord
And utter forth that life in choicest song.
And then with many flourishes and shows,
But still a march of steady purpose heard

Behind them all, he spoke with kindling eyes
Of the three golden requisites of song.—
“ Eye that sees nature, heart that feels her power,
And resolution that dares follow her : ”
Moreover how he trusted all were his
And to be proved ere long. For sternest tasks
To Llarian's young pride and ardour seemed
Most easy. As a little tender child,—
Full softly shod, bearing a fairy sword
Of harmless wood,—slips from his mother's sight,
Resolved to fathom out the mysteries
Of the great world beyond his father's field ;
To slay all giants and disperse the spells
Of all enchanters, doubting not his power.

He told, moreover, how he journeyed now
From Carnâk and the contest of the bards
To Mona's sacred island, in the train
Of the most reverend bard of all the bards,
Golden-tongued Idwal, whose melodious songs
In the good times of Caradoc the king
Were smoother than the smoothest stream that
glides
Through grassy levels of the lowland plains ;
But now in these last miserable days



They grew more rugged. And it might be too—,
Or so at least the fickle multitude
Began to whisper,—that this ruggedness
Concealed a waning vigour in the strain.
But for himself,—Idwal was Idwal still,
Without a rival.

As thus Llarian spoke
His looks reposed in loving reverence
On him of whom he spake, who stood apart,
Beside the foremast. In his lean right hand,
Brown as a leafless branch against the blue
Of April skies, he held an azure staff.
The left with a repellent gesture crushed
His robe against his heart. Far down his breast
A beard as white and crisp as a cascade
Seized by a sudden frost, flowed motionless.

But now the shout that Cynfrân heard had
drawn

An answer from the shore. A dusky speck
Was seen to dance amid the whitening surf
That rose and fell in silence on the rocks
Far off. And as they watched the speck it grew
Into a sailing bird. But nearer still
Became the pilot's slight canoe in which

He sat at ease, facing the silver wake
He left behind him on the pliant sea.
Stroke after stroke he flung the waves behind,
Gathering the distance in his arms. And soon,
Closing beside the bark, he climbed aboard ;
While the crew shouted welcome, and besieged
His ears with eager questions as he passed
To take the helm. Then at the master's word
With measured cries the busy sailors spread
The weather-beaten sails, and plied the oars
That fringed the curving sides. Two paces back,
Two paces forward, the strong rowers strode
In even time upon the groaning deck.

While thus the bark, inspired with sudden life,
Shot swiftly to the shore, the Maccabee,
Turned upon Llarian with exultant looks,
Saying—

“ I pray thee, add thy harp's sweet tones
To the melodious plashing of the oars,
And the shrill crying of these white-winged birds
That wheel and hover round the nearing cliffs.
For now the dangers of the sea and land
Are over, over too the long delay
Betwixt resolve and action. For I too

Have my resolve, young stranger. It is this.
To spend my life henceforth among your tribe,
Teaching the worship of the living God,
Who in the ears of Israel has breathed
The master-key that governs all His works,
And rings through all their music. Now the hour
Is come at length, and therefore my glad soul
Exults within me. All the world is full
Of the renown of your heroic songs ;
Fain would I hear one."

"Nay, forgive me then,"

Llarian replied with chilly loftiness ;
"How shall my shallow youth presume to sing
When Idwal, bard of bards, the silver-haired,
Stands by in silence ? And for thy resolve,
Most liberal stranger, to impart to us
The overflowings of thy wisdom,—know
That all the highest wisdom of the Greeks
Came from our shores. The long-haired Samian
Whose golden verses still entrance the world,
The sage of sages, learned them at the feet
Of our Abāris, in those hoary times
When Rome was yet a meagre colony
Of squalid, ignorant outlaws."

Then he turned

To Idwal, saying,—

“ Master of my soul !

The stranger craves to hear our minstrelsy.

Wilt thou not prove to his astonished ears

That fame for once has undertold the truth ?”

Without a word the aged bard outstretched
His hand and took the harp. Blindly at first
His trembling fingers groped among the strings
And plucked in darkness music’s choicest flowers,
Marring their tender bloom. But soon a flash
Of inward fire enlightened all his soul ;
And thus he sang, while the melodious strings
Answered his touch. Or somewhat like to this.
For though his lays lived in the Cymric tongue
For twice six hundred years, they perished then,
Perished for ever with the Cymric bards
Whom the first Edward slew, and naught remains
But a faint echo of his stirring songs.

“ Across the shining sea

The dove-winged vapours flee

As with the sunrise from the East we come.

In outline clear and high

Against the sunny sky

Once more I see the cliffs that guard our home,
The breastplate of the warrior-Queen
Embossed with rocky points and laced with streamers
green.

“ I see the inland hills
Inveined with milky rills,
Our captive Mother’s breasts of faithful love.
Majestic, motionless,
She lies in her distress,
And marks the changeful clouds that sweep above.
They troop before her stedfast eyes
That gazing upward fain would spell their mysteries.

“ Musing on all her wrongs
Her gaze she still prolongs,
Until the heavens grow pale with sympathy ;
Then, as the clouds unroll
A vast and various scroll
Thick-writ with promises of vengeance nigh,
Fresh vigour throbs in every vein,
She sees the spoiler spoiled, she sees the slayer slain.

“ Though gashed with many a wound,
With many a fetter bound,

Her royal limbs lie prone and helpless still ;
Yet sound and free and strong
Her inward forces throng
Around the colours of unconquered Will.
With that victorious standard hers,
The freedom that she claims, a righteous Heaven
confers.


“ From many a mountain-cell,
From many a secret dell,
Borne in whose arms the prattling streamlets go,
From many a dim retreat
Untracked by alien feet
Her lurking warriors watch the careless foe,
Low-crouching for a space they stay,
Like the fierce wild-cat ere she bounds upon her prey.

“ Woe to the robber Rome !
I see the Cymri come
Like a wild torrent down the mountain side.
I see the hateful race
Whelmed in a last disgrace,
Their dying shrieks re-echo far and wide.
Woe, woe to Rome ! on ruin's verge
She lightly seeks a song, but finds her funeral dirge.”

Here, looking full upon the Maccabee,
He ceased. His features, which the while he sung
Quivered with passion, slowly re-assumed
Their rigid aspect, as the outraged soul
That lately at their loopholes threatened war
Withdrew into its secret citadel.
But scarcely had he ceased, when eagerly
The Maccabee began to answer him.
“ My fingers cannot rule the harp,” he cried,
“ Nor have I skill to guide the stream of thought
Through soft-opposing marginals of rhyme.
Like your own mountain-streams, my untaught speech
Chooses the nearest, though a rugged way.
Listen, and pardon.


“ Sirs, be well assured,
Although we voyage from the shores of Rome,
We come not to your island of the West
As Romans, flushed with pride of victory,
To flout at your disasters, or to mock
Misfortunes that but make you kin with us.
Our country and our home, alas ! like yours,
Are trampled down beneath the spoiler's feet,
Those iron feet that grind a shrinking world.
Sirs, we are Jews ; and but as aliens dwelt

Within the walls of Rome. My comrade drew
His earliest breath upon those sunrise shores
Whence sailed your fathers. As for me, whose eyes
First saw the light in Rome ; therefore, whose heart
Perforce must love her even to the last,—
As men will love their birthplace to the last,
Though in a foreign land,—I too with him
Am exiled from her gates for evermore.
Enough of this. Let us forget awhile
These petty strifes that vex the warring world,
Forget the differences of race and name,
Standing together 'neath this open sky
That binds us in a common brotherhood
To one great Father. Lo ! in these last days
He speaks to us as never heretofore
He spake unto our fathers. Not by mouth
Of teacher or of prophet, but by One
Born from His boundless essence, His express
And perfect Image, Christ of Nazareth.
Who, wrapped in robes of veiling manhood, moved
Along the narrow track of this dim life
And passed into the outer gloom beyond,
Yielding His soul a faultless sacrifice
For our misdoings, and returning thence



Enwreathed with victory. In His name we come
To every varied clime afar and near :
To ancient cities round the central sea,
And hither to the margin of the world.
And in His name we call the tribes of men
To turn and leave their evil ways, and pass
Through mystic waters to His conquering side ;
To gather to His standard, lifted up
Against the powers of darkness. Wherefore, sirs,
Forsake the fruitless service of your shrines ;
Forsake the false gods your frail hands have made ;
Turn to the Great Almighty and Unseen,
Who framed the worlds, and in our nostrils breathed
His breath immortal. Lo ! beside His throne
There stands the Crucified who lives again.
He beckons you with hands that bled for you.
His eyes are on you, eyes that once ran down
With bitter tears for you. Hark ! hark ! He speaks ;
The still, small voice is heard in every soul :—
' Return, return, by Me the living Way
Down-trodden in the depths of death for you.' "


Thus spoke the Maccabee. In eager haste
He seized the theme. But soon the faltering tones,
More solemn, more impassioned, showed a heart



Mastered thereby. And at the first, the bards
Listened and gazed in blank astonishment
At such untamed discourse, wide of all rules
Of rhetoric or rhyme. But in a while
Their keen discernments and their nice disdains
Passed out of sight. The rugged speech had roused
A silent war of thought in many a breast ;
Yet with impassive looks they strove to hide
The conflict from their fellows and themselves.
And when his voice ceased somewhat suddenly,
The well-instructed Llarian took the word,
Speaking from high to low in calm disdain.

“ O stranger ! thou art wise to cast away
The vain concernments of a noisy world.
Life is a shallow show. God only lives.
Into Whose essence we shall sink again,
Subsiding silently in soundless depths,
Unknowing and unknown. But for the rest :
For these strange stories from the sunrise land,
We hear them as we hear in after-times
The wonder-tales that pleased our babyhood.”

And then he took the harp from Idwal's hands
And drew a dreamy prelude from the strings.
Innumerable, soft, melodious sounds



Arose and fell along the yielding air
Beneath his touch, as billows rise and fall
When the wind plays upon the pliant sea.
And through the listening circle round him ran
Mute signs of admiration. Lifted brows
Answered to silent lips that moving shaped
Large words of praise. But when at length his voice
Went sailing forth on those harmonious waves
In stately utterance, each listener grew
Forgetful of his fellow, and all grew
Forgetful of the singer in the song.
Rapt by the rare enchantment far above
All thought of the enchanter's skill, their souls
Floated afar on visionary wings,
Until the world and all its pompous cares
Dwindled to nothingness, its ages shrank
Into a moment's compass. But, alas !
Worn out tradition creeping slowly down
The wasteful centuries, long since has lost
The forceful thoughts and the melodious phrase
That took his hearers captive at his will.

“ When the wild and stormy waves,
The white horses of the sea,

Rise from out their briny caves,
By the breath of heaven set free ;
How they marshal their array
For an onset through the bay !
How their restless pawings scoop
The sea-hollows ! till the troop
Dashes up the trembling beach ;
Where an unseen line they reach
O'er whose goal
Not the proudest wave that ever
Charged the shore in mad endeavour
Dares to roll.

“ As the foremost's foamy hoof
Touches that mysterious line,
Starting back, he rears aloof
Poised upon a balance fine
For a moment :—then with roar
Like the thunder, on the shore
Plunging headlong, breaks and falls.
From the cliff the echo calls ;
While, far up the pebbly steeps,
Wide the wat'ry ruin sweeps
Ere it tires ;


And with hollow, rattling moans
Shrinking back among the stones,
Slow expires.

“ Yet the following wave as fast
O'er the quivering relics flies ;
Curled aloft in volume vast
Tilts against the stormy skies.
Now once more, that viewless hand
Bids the daring water stand :
Hurls it with resistless force
On the shore, resounding hoarse.
Yet still rolling loud and long
On they come, a thousand strong,
Scorning rest ;
Till the slow-subsiding main
Draws them softly once again
To its breast.

“ So with man : by breath divine
Lifted like a transient wave
From life's sea : in line on line
Rolled to break upon the grave.
Races, empires, towering rise ;
Each in turn collapsing dies :

Schools and systems proudly heave ;
Soon like them no vestige leave :
Far along the shore of Time
Swells and sinks the sounding chime,
Ceaseless, till
Gathered back in calm repose
To the depths from whence they rose,
All are still.

“ When, like breakers on the shore,
Dying sink the Cymric race :
When our wars and songs are o’er
And you pass into our place :
Brief will then your glory be,
Brief as our adversity.
Merged in nations now unknown,
Risen again to claim our own,
We, as baffled Rome recoils
On the splendour of her spoils,
Conquering leap :
Higher up the glittering strands,
Farther round the golden sands
We shall sweep.



“ Empty vaunt ! and idle fear !

Soon the eternal calm shall come,

When the kingdoms disappear

And the shouting wars are dumb.

Then like some forgotten dream

All our puny strifes shall seem :

Lulled within that ocean, where

Comes nor triumph nor despair ;

Far in whose unfathomed deep

Alien races peaceful sleep

Side by side.

There, unquenched by storm or night,

Evermore the sacred Light

Rules the tide.”

Now might be seen that as this languid close

Fainted away, a dull and dreamy look

Was left behind on every listener's face.

Each felt a subtle network wound about

His quick affections ; while some palsying power,

That numbed the nerve of motive, crept along

The muscles of the mind, and locked it up


In chill indifference. Wherefore should we toil

To find the truth of nature and of God ;

To right the wrong in self and in the world ;
Why vex our souls with any careful aims ;
If life be but a transient, barren show,
A trivial ripple on a boundless sea,
Soon smoothed for ever ?

Julius was the first
To free his spirit from these cobweb-chains,
And fling them to the winds. " O sir," he said,
" Thine is a noble song and nobly sung ;
Alive with all the passion of the sea ;
Melodious with its mournful cadences ;
Yet with a calm heart like its central depths.
And ever, as thy touch inspired the strings
I seemed to hear ten thousand thousand waves
Dissolve in music on a distant shore.

" But yet methinks if all men steeped their souls
In these delicious languors ; which beat down
The strongest wing of hope, nay destroy hope,
Or level its high meaning with despair ;
Which puff the hollow heart and empty mind
With dull resistance, till they simulate
The force and fervour of a living soul ;
Which make good evil, making evil good,
And both a transient and unmeaning form ;




Methinks if this dead-calm philosophy
Became the common faith of all mankind,
Soon none were left to hold it. Since, deprived
Of that main stimulus and spur of life
Which points to endless conquests and increase,
Life upon life remodelled,—sire and son
Linked in unbroken chain,—a noble race
Where he that wisely wins bequeaths his strength
To him that follows in the vast career ;
Deprived of this, the gross material frame
Might still increase and multiply, to fill
A sordid world with counterfeits of man ;
But the true man, God's viceroy in the earth,
Formed in His image, formed to conquer self,
To ravel out His secret ways in time
And win the better life that lies beyond,
Would wither in a lonely barrenness.

“ Pardon, O bards, the freedom of my words ;
And let me crave of you indulgent ears,
While with ungarnished speech I utter forth
The burden of the message in my soul,
Touching the godlike destiny of man.

“ Not as the waves arise upon the sea
Does man arise out of the depths of God.

But as the vapours which the sea exhales
That parting float along the yielding air ;
Now piled aloft in creamy battlements,
Now molten in a mass of threatening steel,
Now spread in snowy network on the blue,
Now lying scattered far in fleecy flocks,
Range beyond range, that narrow to the west
And bask in dying splendours of the sun.
Then, as the long processions of the clouds
Advance to bless the thirsty solitudes ;
To feed the vital juices of the soil
And live in all the myriad forms of life ;—
To trickle from the secret mountain-springs,
To blend in rills and gather into streams,
Until the vast collective rivers roll
Their wealth and beauty through the peopled plains ;—
So passes on the immortal breath of God
Outbreathed in the immortal soul of man.
What though the rivers run into the sea ?
The flowers remain ; the flocks have quenched their
thirst,
What though this transient life return to God ?
The separate essence of the soul He made,
Still unabsorbed, remains to praise Him still.



We are the offspring of His life and love,
Destined to people out that life and love
Through yet untrodden wilds of space and time.
Such was His charge to man, His delegate
Throned in the centre of a docile world.

“ Alas ! dethroned as soon as throned, he fell,
Reaching too high ; and life's unsullied stream
Was poisoned by one subtle drop of sin
In its first springing forth. Alas ! alas !
Let all the morning stars that shouted once
For joy, for ever weep their dewy tears.

“ Yet how could finite spirits choose the right
Save through the tyrant discipline of wrong ?
And how could frailty learn that it was frail
Save by severe experience ? Therefore God
In foresight calm withheld His awful arm.
And now His image in the darkened soul
Grew dim and far, and in its stead arose
Base idols all distorted and defaced
By attributes of evil manifold
Reflected from an evil consciousness.
Then, worshipping these attributes, the soul
Grew baser yet, defiling and defiled,
For ever sinking deeper in the mire

Of yet more vile idolatry. At length
God from the thickest darkness stretched an arm
And summoned one from out the tribes of men,
And faithful Abram drawing near obeyed.
Abram the father of a chosen race
Stubborn and dull of heart yet fearing God.
But all the world besides rolled round in sin ;
For though He spake to these in sun and moon
And all the punctual beunties of the year,
They would not heed. Wherefore He gave them up
To foul disgrace, blackening and deepening still.

“ But yet once more from dazzling depths which seem
To us but darkness, comes that beckoning Hand.
Not now to one, but all : not now to found
A sacred nation but to save a world,
Roman and Briton, Greek and Jew.

“ O sirs !

Did I not speak of rivers, flowers, and flocks ?
Begone, begone, with tame comparisons.
The free soul mocks the grasp of simile
And bursts away to stand apart, alone,
More inaccessible than any star.
But bid her now to question of herself
And she will answer boldly—yea—I am,

And *shall be* through the widening worlds beyond ;
And in the buried seed of this small life
My boundless future lies, a pliant germ.

“ Therefore awake ! arise ! shake off your dreams,
Stand before God and hear Him when He speaks
By us His servants and His witnesses.
Lo ! life and immortality are brought
To light at length by Christ the risen One.
The morn your ancient seers and bards desired,
But died or ere they saw, has dawned on you.
O ! rise and follow to the perfect day.
Advance as men whom a great captain leads
To glittering heights of conquest. Then at last
When the loud shout of triumph rings afar
Through echoing worlds, when the great fight is fought,
The warrior rests upon his well-tried arms.
Not sinking in the depths of Deity
Unknowing and unknown, absorbed, diffused ;—
But all compact in full identity,
And welcomed to his spirit's father-land,
He dwells at peace, he knows as he is known.
There, in that genial clime, the royal flower
Of manhood shall unfold from age to age
Nobler and nobler yet for evermore.”

Here Julius ceased. His animáted hand
Sank by his side. And on his countenance
O'er which so many lights and shades of thought
Had flitted while he spoke, there fell again
Its wonted radiant calm, full of the Heaven
His latest words portrayed.

But now the time
For song and for discourse was past. The ship
Neared the low beach, alive with villagers ;
Whose voices, mingled in a busy hum,
Swelled on the air as shoreward plunged the keel.
The fishermen, in eager haste to share
In her unlading, shouting drew their fleet
Of slight canoes and buoyant coracles
Down to the oozy verge, deeming the tide
Too low to lift her to the pier. Behind,
The ready-worded mothers and shy maids
Stood on the higher ridges of the beach.
These with round arms shading their curious eyes
Gazed at the vessel and the crowded pier.
While those would ever and anon break off
Their eager speech to glance along the shore
And shrill a warning to some heedless child
Straying too far upon the treacherous sand,

That rose in spongy circlets round about
The little footprints. High upon the left
A guard of Roman legionaries stood,
Their bright arms flashing in the morning sun,
To question of the names and the intents
Of such as landed ; while with humorous taunts
That showed small reverence for the conquering race
The Cymric crowd looked on.

And now full soon,
While yet the tide was deep about the pier,
The vessel neared it, and the sailors flung
The chains ashore, and laid a rugged bridge
Of planks between. Then first the train of bards
Attended by a pompous retinue
That bore the harps, the wands, the sacred sprigs
Wreathed in dark symbols ; and were bent beneath
Changes of raiment and the thousand things
Which meet, or fail to meet, the thousand needs
Of those whom fortune favours, swept on shore.
While lost within the shadow of their state
The pilgrims stepped behind them, bearing each
A staff and scrip, no more : saving in truth
His favour in Whose favour there is life
And more than wealth or fame. And hidden thus

They might have passed unnoticed by the guard,
But that they honoured law even in the hands
Of lawless usurpation and drew near.
And as it chanced, the captain, sorely chafed
By all the tangled business of the bards,
Worse tangled by the comments of the crowd,
Turned the side-glance of a distracted eye
To where the pilgrims stood, and glad to seize
A moment's respite, reached a hasty hand
To take their rolls of licence, set his seal,
And bade the soldiers let them pass in peace.

Now as they went in silence up the beach
They heard a step that followed hastily,
And turning, Llarian faced them.

“Sirs”—he said,


“Forgive me for this forced companionship,
And bear with me a moment. For I see
That spite of all your marvels and wild tales,
And spite of all our symbols, with the which
We give a solid form to certain truths
Too subtle for the vulgar mind to seize,
We yet are brothers in the inner faith.
For you err widely when you call on us
To leave the false gods our frail hands have made.

Corrupts the sooner in the sun's pure beams.
But lo !"—he turned to Julius,—“ on thy lips
Some utterance hovers ; and thy silver hairs
Give hope of wisdom. Thy discourse was wise.
Speak then and I will listen heedfully.”

Then Julius, thus besought, said with a smile,
“ I am not over-careful, courteous youth,
To claim thy meed of wisdom ; lest perchance,
When thou hast heard me further, thou reclaim
The rash preferment. That most precious pearl
Of wisdom, for the which I, having found,
Have bartered all I ever counted wise
Before I found it, might but seem to thee
A worthless bauble ; since the spirit's eye
Sees only what the pictured type within
Prepares her to perceive. So that none know
This heavenly wisdom as the wisest thing,
But those in whom a sacred craving forms
The mould that fits her. Therefore, O my son,
Pray for this boon : without it, though I speak
As with an angel's tongue, I speak in vain.

“ Now therefore be it known to thee, the tale
Which thou hast counted vain, must still be vain,
If that the sober truth be vanity.

For He of whom my comrade spoke, in Whom
The invisible glories of the God of gods
Dwelt visibly, Whose mortal body died
Even as we die, but rose as we shall rise
When the great gates of Hades roll away ;
He is no fable-fabric, shaped at will
To house a truth too delicate to bear
The common contact of the crowd ; far less
Is He a dazzling marvel, forged to chain
Their credulous obedience. But He lived,
Nor long ago, upon this common earth.
'Tis in the memory of living men
How amidst signs and wonders He was born
Of a pure Jewish maiden, in the land
Given to our fathers in the olden time.
In Him, a man among the sons of men,
The Godhead walked on earth, poor and despised,
Reversing all the maxims of the age.
His words of godlike power, if writ at full,
Would cumber up the world ; His deeds of love,
If told at large, would overlast the night
And lengthen out beyond the following days,
And still the half would linger on untold,
Yet none the less, nay far the more, for all



This ample raying forth of love and power,—
The bitterness of envy followed Him,
The hatred of the darkness thrust Him forth,
Into the cruel hands of lawless law ;
So that His mortal manhood died forlorn.
That thus it should be, seers had long foretold ;
And thus it came to pass ; and all I tell
Took solid shape within this outer life.
And be thou sure of this ; no fables, spun
By condescending brains for simple ears,
Can body forth with such vitality
The nature of the great Unsearchable,
As did the life He lived, the death He died.”

“ These are strange things,” said Llarian, “ which
you bring

To our astonished ears :” and as he spoke,
The war of light and darkness in his soul
Sent up its solemn gleams and awful glooms
To flash and darken o’er his troubled brow :
“ Or, if they be not as you think, at least
They show strange cravings in the human hearts
That conjured up this tale to quiet them :—
Yet not so strange ; for I myself have heard
From out a hollow chamber of my heart

A sad voice issue ; as of one that pined
In bitter solitude ; deep, deep within ;
Too deep for utterance in articulate words,
But with a melancholy sound that said,
Oh, I am weary, weary to the death
Of all this vast, inhuman, Infinite,
Which men call God ; which never drops adown
One tear of pity ; never sheds below
One look of love ; and never reaches forth
A hand of help :—But when I heard this voice
I choked it down with wise remonstrances,
Nor dreamed till now it spoke the truth.”

He ceased.

And on the sunny shore they sat them down,
And Julius spake again ; and Llarian
Answered again ; yea many times again
Each spoke and answered ; till the shaft of truth
Pierced deep within the heart of Llarian,
Healing the wound it made. An hour went by
Before he marked how far the ebbing tide
Had shrunk to seaward. Then he sprang to his feet,
Saying in softened and regretful tones,
“ But we must part ; for see where Idwal stands
Upon the western cliff and beckons me.


I scarce would grieve that master of my soul
For all the light to which his eyes are blind.
And yet I would ; for he has bid me seek
Truth before all ; and in the after-world
Idwal himself will more than pardon me.
But now farewell ; perchance our threads of life
May cross again and weave a firmer bond."

Thus Llarian parted ; and the other twain
Followed his lessening shape along the sands
With eyes of silent blessing ; while their souls
Burned in an unseen sacrifice of prayer.
And when his many-coloured robe grew dim
Within the dusky distance, and his form
Had dwindled slowly to a gliding speck,
And they had turned them to their course again,
That unseen sacrifice was fragrant still
Upon God's altar.

Now it came to pass,
While yet the brief autumnal day shone warm,
They left the level shore for a rough track,
By which in weary plight they fared along
A marshy vale ; while faint and fainter grew
The sound of the deep breathing of the sea,
That panted far behind them on the sands.

And when the sun sloped to the west, and all
The reedy pools on either side were red
With slant reflections from the flaming sky,
Their weary feet still traced a winding course
Along low hillocks plumed with faded grass,
On which their waving shadows rose and fell.


The misty breath of Autumn settled chill
Upon the plain, and not a sound was heard.
Save when a moor-hen, startled from her nest,
Fled through the rustling sedges ; or anon,
A nimble-witted water-rat discerned
The echo of their feet above his home,
And dropping in the pool with a soft splash
Ferried across to the opposing shore,
Clasped in the gleaming ripple that he made.
North-west they toiled along, intent to gain
A tufted mount that stood advanced before
The inland hills, and juttred on the plain.
They walked in silence ; for the bare, wild scene
Looked doubly wild and bare to alien eyes,
Used to the glowing beauty of the South.
Even the farewell glances of the sun,
That filled the sober aspect of the clouds
With lively red, seemed cold and watery



To Julius : to whose thoughts the dappled sky
Showed like the tear-stained face of one who parts
In sorrow and mistrust ; unlike the look
Of happy skies in Lydia. Often there,
Standing at evening on the fading shore,
His lengthening shadow sloping up the beach,
Had he beheld a path of glory span
The blue Egæan ; from the moistened sand
Beneath his feet, on to the utmost verge ;
And in that path ten thousand thousand waves
That like a crowd of silken courtiers
Came thronging smoothly from the open gates
Of the air-palace ; whose foundations shone
With all the precious, many-tinted stones
That garnish forth the heavenly city's walls.
There, gazing far through airy colonnades
That lengthened still as still the turning earth
Rolled eastward darkly, he had seen within
The splendid presence of the setting sun,
Throned like a king, whose favourable smiles
Enrich his parting vassals to the last.

And then a contrast keener far than this
Or any other in the outer world,
Pressed on the Maccabee and silenced him.

How dainty-splendid looked their enterprise,
Seen from afar ! how rudely squalid now !
Then in heroic unity it rose
And seemed to float mid-heaven, from crown to base
Clothed with immortal bloom, and delicate
By airy veils of distance drawn between.
Now, broken into trivial points, it stood
Based on low dust, the rosy tints were gone,
And the coarse grain of circumstantial life
Thrust itself all unflattered into view.





PART III.

As thus the pilgrims mused, upon their left
A figure seemed to start as from the ground,
And Cynfrân strode towards them. His curled locks,
Black as the seaweed left by stormy tides
High on bleached ridges of the summer shore,
Were all aflame against the crimson sky
That burned behind him, and made yet more pale
The white wrath of his face ; while in his eyes
Flashed hate unquenchable : in his right hand
The ashen spear was poised, ready to fly.

At this strange sight the pilgrims held their breath:
They lacked not courage ; yet their manly hearts

Blenched for a moment, and each strove in vain
To thrust his fellow to the safer place,
Awaiting the assault.

But Cynfrân checked
His fierce career, seeing them all unarmed,
And lowered the threatful spear and called to them
In deepest gutturals of the Cymric tongue,—
“ Draw forth your weapons, for I scorn to take
Advantage of surprisal.”

“ Nay, good friend,
We bear no weapons, save a kindly will
To thee and all mankind,” said Julius then,
Advancing towards him with a gracious mien.

But Cynfrân answered sternly,—“ Stand aloof,
Or else my spear shall pin thee to the ground.
Say, what has brought you hither? Are ye not
Of that vile race that wrongs us, that has snared
Our Caradoc by treacherous woman-hands,
And bound him to your general’s chariot-wheels,
And given him as a show to gaping Rome?
Yea, and his sire besides, the generous Brân,
Thralling the prisoner and the hostage too?”

“ Enough,” said Julius, “ thou hast widely erred ;
My comrade is a Roman, but he owes

No boon but exile to the Roman power.

For me : I first drew breath upon the shore

Whence sailed your fathers. For the rest : know
this,—

Although a shameful treachery has given

Your noble Caradoc to Cæsar's hands,

Though a more shameful treachery' still holds

The hostage and the prisoner both in Rome,

Yet sire and son are treated royally,

And lodged and served right nobly, as becomes

Such noble captives. If in happier times

Thou hast fought in the king's forces, or hast served

In the king's council, thou wilt know this ring,

Which proves us trusty friends of Caradoc."

And while he spoke he lifted his right hand,

And straight the sunset flashed upon a gem,

Turned to the palm, clasped by a serpent wrought

In finest gold. Then Cynfrân at the sight

Had almost fallen before them ; for how oft

That gem had flashed upon the royal hand

That cheered the Cymric forces to the charge.

" Pardon me, sirs," he faltered forth at length,

" I thought as much to see the sky descend,


The sea hang in its place above our heads,

As to find friends of Caradoc in you.
Lo! I am yours : command me : I am nerved
By memories of inexpiable wrongs
To do more cruel and more desperate deeds
Upon the alien race than ever yet
Curdled your blood to hear of or to dream.
You come to stir the smouldering fire of the land ?
To gather up the scattered Cymric strength
And hurl the invaders headlong ? I am yours,
Yours to the death."

"Nay," Julius sternly said,
"Our errand is as far from thy wild thoughts
As heaven is far above the howling storm.
This royal signet-ring was merely given
That the king's friends may trust us. Rave not thus
Of memories of inexpiable wrong :
The most inexpiable and most cruel wrong
That ever yet was done by man to man,
Shrinks into nothing by the monstrous growth
Of that vast wrong he heaps upon himself,
Who, wrenching off his soul from God and good,
Sells her pure beauty to the vilest ends ;
Whether revenge or some yet viler end,
If there be viler. Go and muse on this :

Vengeance belongs to God; and His revenge
Is love and mercy."

So they turned and went ;
While dumb with manifold surprise, and pierced
To the soul's quick, Cynfrân stood motionless,
All darkly drawn against the western sky,
Till they had passed the levels of the marsh.
But as they went upon their way, the heart
Of Julius smote him. For he thought :—' Perchance
This soul is sorely wounded, and its cry
That fell with such discordance on my ear
Was harsh through grievous anguish. Yea, he spoke
Of memories of inexpiable wrongs ;
And through his wildly melancholy eyes
Looked forth a miserable life. Alas !
How have I failed to follow in Thy track,
Most pitiful Jesus ! who wouldst never break
The bruised reed, but bind it up with love.'
And then once more and for the thousandth time
He thought of Claudia. Of the gentle grace,
The meek, unconscious wisdom of her ways ;
Of that clear eye of a most single aim
Which filled the body of her life with light.
So shamed his heart with stern comparisons,




Laid all his spirit open to the light,
Abased himself and won the power to rise.


Now as they left the fourth long league behind
They neared the tufted knoll, and found it stood
Amidst a steep and stony watercourse,
Down which the streamlet ran which fed the marsh.
It was an islet fenced about with trees,
And piled by Druids of forgotten days
About an oak of double sacredness.
Seeing that round its solitary roots
The homage of the parted stream was poured,
And that the healing plant had grown thereon.
Below the mount the waters met again
With gurgling welcomes, and the happy stream
Quickened its pace and hastened blithely on ;
Unguessing how the melancholy marsh
Would spread a net to catch her silver feet,
And choke her tuneful voice, and hold her fast
Like a poor fly within the spider's web,
From the great mother-sea, that heaved afar
Her gleaming breast along the low-ridged shore,
Chiding and calling to her lingering child.
Crossing the brook, they set themselves to climb,
The turfy slope ; when suddenly there broke

Upon their startled ears a mournful voice
That with wild guttural plainings filled the air :
And when he heard it, Julius paused amazed,
And with his right hand timorously checked
His fellow by the robe ; while with the left
Curved round his ear, he strove to catch the sounds
That wandered to and fro among the trees.
Again that piercing, melancholy cry !
At which the Maccabee released his robe
From Julius' grasp, and springing up the knoll
He disappeared, while Julius' slower steps
Toiled up behind : but e'er he reached midway,
The younger rose upon the ridge again,
A hushing finger signing on his lips,
The bright defiance wholly melted out
From all his altered face, which wore instead
The pained and tender look of one who sees
A sorrow with an unknown history.

Soon side by side they stood, and looking down
Saw in the centre a huge oak that reared
A gnarled and knotted trunk, which held aloft
A roof of ponderous foliage. Tier on tier,
The twisted bough and branch and angular twig
Carried through great to small, through small to less,



The image of a rugged earnest strength.
While like a man bent on a noble aim,
Who clothes himself with beauty unawares,
Each sinewy limb was wreathed with carven leaves
In graceful groups, that joined themselves again
In larger masses rich with gold and green
And leafy hollows filled with violet shade.
But Julius and his fellow only marked
A lonely woman sitting still as death
Among the bare roots of that ancient tree,
Beside a hoary sacrificial stone.
Her face was on her knees, around her knees
The clasp of ivory arms, and down her neck
A rippled fleece of dusky tresses hung
Over the ruined richness of a robe
That told of happier times. Above her head
The squirrel plucked the acorn, at her feet
The robin hopped and flitted unabashed.
But as the pilgrims questioned under breath,
“ Does she still live ? ” “ Was not that cry her last ? ”
“ Nay, see the vital tension of her hands : ” —
As thus they whispered, suddenly she sprang
With a wild gesture to her feet, and waved
Her outspread arms on the regardless air.



The well-accustomed creatures of the wood
Marked her no more than if a harmless sheep
Had risen up from depths of dewy grass
Uttering her plaintive call for a strayed lamb;
While in the Cymric tongue she cried aloud,
Awaking all the echoes with her song :—

“ O Gladys ! Gladys ! Gladys ! come to me !

My soul cries after thee.

As from the crag the wailing eagle cries
After her eaglet, when the swift mist flies
Thick sweeping o'er Eriri, and her eyes
Have lost all ken of the weak, fluttering thing

Whose untried wing

Never again may come

To nestle underneath her breast at home.

“ O Gladys ! Gladys ! Gladys ! come to me !

My soul cries after thee.

It cannot be that thou hast slipped aside
Into the life unseen, whose waters wide
Sweep round the life we see ; for had'st thou died
Thy spirit in its parting agony

Had turned to me :

But not a sound or vision

Has warned my watching soul of thy transition.



“ O Gladys ! Gladys ! Gladys ! come to me !

My soul cries after thee.

Hear me ! Thou great, unutterable One,
To none save the white-bearded Druids known,
To whom along this sacrificial stone
Full many a victim's flowing blood has passed.

Hear me at last !

O ! end this weary pain,
Give back my nursling to my arms again.

“ Alas ! no more a nursling ! twelve sad years

Washed by my stormy tears,

One after one have lost their bloom and died,
Since Gladys, my heart's darling, as blue-eyed
As speedwells are, was parted from my side ;
And as a stranger would she greet me now.

Yet where art thou ?

My soul cries after thee.

O Gladys ! Gladys ! Gladys ! come to me.”

At this refrain she paused, and swept the sky
And all the grove and all the land about
With wild despairing eyes ; then sank again
On the cold ground among the wrinkled roots.
Now Julius bade his comrade by a sign


Remain aloof ; and with his eyes tear-dimmed
Went forward in compassionate courtesy
To warn the mourner of their presence near.
His footsteps rustling in the withered leaves
Plucked back her senses, self-withdrawn and drowned
Within the still depths of an absent mind.
A gleam of hope sparkled within her eyes ;
And rising calmly, her dilated form
Stood solemnly expectant ; but alas !
When she saw nothing but a way-worn man
Advancing towards her, all her features fell,
Displeasure darkened in her gloomy looks,
And pride and sternness stiffened every limb.

“ Sad mother,” said he gently, “ pardon us ;
In no officious freedom do we break
Upon thy sacred sorrow. Strangers here,
Seeking a pathway to the inland hills,
We chanced upon this mount ; and could not fail
To hear thee mourning for a long-lost child.
The words thou uttered’st touched a secret spring
Of grief in my own breast, and made it flow ;
For I too mourn a dear and long-lost child
Held captive by the snares of wicked men.”

At this her proud eyes shot a spark of scorn,



And thus she answered—" If thy love were such,
So cold, so careless, as to leave thy child
Captive amid the snares of wicked men,
It is not worthy to sit down and mourn
Here in the dust by mine." But Julius met
Her scorn with meekness, saying, " Let it be ;
We will not vex the soreness of our hearts
By any rash reproaches ; nor expand
Our tearful woes into a cloud of words
In bitter rivalry. Thy cup of grief,
Lady, I see, is full to overflow ;
And mine, God knows, has scanty room to spare.
Yet must I own, my loss has not that edge
Which wounds the instinct of the quivering flesh.
The life which throbs in my child's outward frame
Called me not father ; but her soul's dear life
Was fed through mine from the eternal source.
And could I know that still that life is hers,
Our mournful parting I could almost hail
As a delightful meeting. Oftentimes
In silent messages at dead of night
Her spirit to my spirit witnesses
That so it is. Then trembling with the joy
I waken, and give thanks that my lost lamb




Is safe within the Heavenly Shepherd's fold."

These healing thoughts that touched with tender
hand

Her inward hurts, so fretted heretofore
With cruel fears and fancies of the brain,
Softened her heart at first : so that she stood
With lips half opened and with moistened eyes,
Hanging upon his words ; but when he ceased
Her brow regathered all its ominous shade,
And thus she answered him—

“ Stranger, thou speak'st

Fantastic riddles to a broken heart :
I only know that I have lost my child.
Not mine by any fanciful conceit,
But by the close, quick tie of motherhood.
Mine,—for she drew her essence from my heart ;
Mine,—by an anguish, by a rapture too,
Endured, enjoyed, by me and me alone ;
Mine,—by the helpless, formless infancy
That lay unconscious in my arms and thrilled
Their veins with new, unutterable life ;
While in each finger that so gently pressed
Her fragile limbs, lay hid a giant's strength
To shield them from the faintest touch of harm.”



Before the sacred passion of her grief
Julius a moment paused : then with few words
Emphatic, and a countenance that showed
Through its transparent veil the light within,
He strove to kindle a like cheering flame
Within the gloomy chamber of her heart.

“ O lady, rest assured, the All-seeing One,
On whom but even now thy spirit called,—
Who gave the child and gave the love she found,—
Still has her in His ken, though far from thine.
Yet tell me, was thy child stolen from thy side ?
Our business takes us far and wide, throughout
The Cymric lands, and we may chance to light
Upon some hints or traces of the maid.”

At this a faint light struggled through the gloom
That shadowed all her face ; and with a voice
Changed as the worn-out wind changes its voice
When maddening storms abate, she answered him,—
“ Like a sick sheep, whom all the butting flocks
Chase from the fold, have I, alas ! been long ;
My kindred would not bear with my complaints,
And drove me from their homesteads and their paths,
And for the rest I scorned their proffered aid.
Thus dwelling outcast in the caves and woods,—

Conversing only with the reckless winds
And tumbling torrents,—their monotonous sounds
Have sunk into my brain : till all I feel ;
All I remember ; all that once I was ;
And all the horror of the thing I am ;—
Has grown an inarticulate misery.

“ Yet still it might be uttered, were this all,
Were I alone ;—but,—let me whisper it,—
A hateful thing is with me in the woods.
It glares upon me from the noonday sky ;
It mocks me from behind the forest-trees ;
And when I stoop to drink at any brook,
Features more vile than any words can show,
Yet with a shocking likeness to the face
Worth more than all the world beside to me,
Are pictured in it close beside my own
And ripple in and out and mix with them.”

Here Julius snapped the dark thread of her
thoughts :—

“ O lady, I beseech thee, do not give
The Evil one this mastery over thee,
To speak as if his paltry trickery
Were truth and substance. Rather cast thyself
Into the strong arms of the God of gods ;

Gird up thy soul, and boldly trample out
This spark of hell. And truly when we heard
Thy sorrowing voice among these silent trees
Thy words bespoke a mind that knew itself."

"Yea! yea!" she cried, "but hear me, or my
heart

Bursts with its ghastly secret. Then at times,
When I have missed the horror for a while
And my crushed soul begins to breathe once more,
And,—like a hunted creature when the hunt
Has swept its cruel pageant out of sight,
Peers timidly from covert and begins
To venture forth into the light again,—
Just as calm thoughts, like clear, delicious springs,
Spread out their coolness through my burning brain,
Then from the very heart of that reprieve
Breaks forth the blackness of a deeper doom;
A voice not mine rings from my loathing lips
In cruel mockery; by the which I know
That through some unwatched door the enemy
Has stolen into my citadel of life
And has me in its wicked will;—"

"Nay, nay,"

Said Julius, "none was ever yet, thank God,

In any wicked will save but his own.
Though like a cruel beast the Evil one
Roams for his prey, a greater far than he
Is still at hand to pluck the trembling soul
Out of his deathful jaws. Cry out to Him,—
To the great Father of the spirits of men,—
And He will hear and rescue.”

“ It may be : ”—

She answered,—“ for this quietness I feel,
By which I hear the tumult that is past,
And solve it into words, as I have done ;
This quiet fell upon me when I came
By chance on yonder crômlech ; which drew out
My longing soul in cryings to the God
Who lives unseen beneath the shows of things ;
And Who, perchance, would succour me and give
My lost one to my longing arms again,
If but I brought an offering in my hand.
But all my wealth is seized by grasping men,
My treacherous kindred, who enrich themselves,
Saying that I am mad. There is not left
A single lamb of all my fruitful flocks
To bleed and burn upon the altar now,
In this my utmost need. But as I said,

This quiet fell upon me when my soul
Had cried to the Unseen; and it may be
That He would save me from the hateful thing
If but I brought an offering in my hand."

"Ah, Lady," answered Julius, "He is not
A man, to do a favour for a gift.

Lo! all the creatures of the wilderness,
And all the cattle on a thousand hills,
And all the fulness of the world, are His.
As well to take a single grain of sand
From all the myriads on the ample shore,
And with great pomp of servile sacrifice
Present it to the immeasurable sea.
The gift He asks for is a thankful heart
That owns His love in all things, and in days
Of trouble calls on Him, as calls a child,
With no misgiving, on its father's name.
And as for our transgressions of the law
Writ by His finger in the inward parts,
He wraps His love, like a vast mantle, round
Our naked souls and covers all our sin.
Yea, One that was to Him as much more dear
Than any son to any father's heart,
As God is more than man,—His only One,—

Who was before the eldest worlds were framed,
And was the Word by which He framed the worlds,
He did not spare in this our utmost need."

"Your words are strange," she answered; "and

anon

I would hear more; but now that I am free
From that vile presence, let me tell my tale."
Then with authoritative looks that spoke
Of times when many served her signing hand,
She beckoned down the younger from the ridge
And looked beyond them both and spake and said,—

"I was the bride of Owain, valiant Owain,
Golden-haired Owain, heir of all our tribe,
Grandson of Llyr, the ever-gracious king.
Dark as the dusky evening were my looks,
Fair as the morning his: and as the day,
The ruddy, lively, and lighthearted day,
Smit with his contrast in the gloomy night
Follows for ever on her silent steps,
So Owain, sunny-hearted, yellow-haired,
Pursued me, dark and moody Gwendolen.
And not more closely in the tender dawn
Are these two wedded than our hearts were wed.
Within that tender dawn a star arose:

Gladys our morning star. Those three brief years
Seem like a lifetime ! thronged with pleasant cares
And careful pleasures. Every golden day
Held in its narrow bounds a whole July
Of warmth and sunshine, as I watched my child.
Fast, fast, in strength and loveliness she grew
Within my cradling arms ; until at length,
With something of a half regretful joy,
I felt her little hand escape from mine,
And saw her totter off across the grass,
Lured by some sunlit flower."

Here, memory-snared,
The mournful speaker dropped her dreamy eyes
To where beneath the sapling oaks streamed in
A ray of sunset light, and overflowed
The turf with liquid gold.

"Yes, even now
In my cold misery, I could almost smile,
When I remember how the slender stalk
Withstood her soft grasp at the first ; and then,
Yielding and suddenly snapping in her hand,
Disturbed the poise of her unpractised limbs,
So that she sank down in a rosy heap.
And how at that a filmy cloud of fear

Bedimmed her innocent brow ; yet scarcely seen
Before it vanished in more radiant smiles.
While her soft shout of babbling laughter hailed
The dear-bought trophy.

“ But my thoughts have strayed :—

Thus busied with my homeborn happiness
I turned a deaf ear to the moaning griefs
That filled the hapless land. The dissonant clash
Of battle all about, the muttering roll
Of other wars to come, were naught to me.
When Owain spoke in passionate bitterness
Of the great strifes and treacheries of the times,
My lips alone replied, with eager words
Covering my absent thoughts, that still caressed
The child and father. But alas! the while,
And none the less because I would not see,
There creeping came behind, near and more near,
The cruel hour that snatched them from my arms.
Silent, unfeared, it came ; like a fell beast
That glides on velvet paws from out a wood,
To where upon the sunny skirting bank
The kids sport merrily.

“ For now once more

As the white torrents hurry with fierce leaps

Adown Eriri's grey, precipitous side,
To muster in the depths of Gwynant Vale
And in the rolling Glaslyn issue forth,
The Cymri gathered up their scattered strength,
And pouring from their mountain fastnesses,
Swept down upon the foe.


“ Among the rest

Owain arose, the heir of all his tribe,
To lead them to the field. Proudly I wreathed
The golden chaplet round the noble head
That almost quenched it with its yellow curls;
Proudly I bound the shield upon his arm
And gave the long lance to his nervous hand,
While he stood silent, looking in my face
With kind and pitiful eyes, that saw this mood
Was but a ripple on the sea of woe
That drowned my soul at parting with my lord.
One brief and firm embrace, and he was gone.
I saw his war-car smoking down the vale,
Saw through the dust the scythes flash in the sun.
Then anguish came upon me suddenly;
But with a stubborn strength I forced it down.
I took the smiling Gladys in my arms,
And called my trembling maids, and followed on

After the wheels of Owain. As we went
We met the startled morning, freshly sprung
From the low hills above the Roman camp ;
While yet our weary way was half untrod,
Its burning wings had broadened into noon
Above our throbbing temples ; and or ere
Our dusty sandals threaded all the vale,
It passed away behind on curving plumes
And hovered in the west. And now we saw
Wide opened to the East a level tract
Through which the Sabren flowed, her unseen course
Traced by her misty breath that rising filled
The empty spaces of the cooling air.
There, at the valley's mouth, we paused ; and climbed
A pine-fringed knoll, that like a sentinel
Kept watch to rearward of the Cymric host.
Mid-distant, by the river's farther shore,
On a green slope that faced the setting sun,
The Romans stood : fast-rooted like a rock
On which our surging ranks dissolved in vain.
Again, again the sparkling crest of spears
Arose and flew upon the solid mass ;
But harmless as the scattered spray they fell
Upon the close-locked shields, that like the scales

Of some huge monster guarded from assault
The legioned life within. Once and again
Our valiant Cymri charged ; once and again
Fell back repulsed and baffled to the ford.
There in the hollow, small as ants, they moved ;
And as we watched a sudden shaking seemed
To seize and scatter them ; whereat my maids,
All but the noble-hearted Angharad,
Wrung helpless hands and shrieked that all was lost.
But I, who marked still steadfast in the rear
My Owain's chariot, notable afar
By the white steeds whose manes flowed terrible
As meteors in the air, I trembled not,
But saw a martial method in the change.
And soon, more swift than speech, the scythèd cars
Dashed from the rear between the opening lines,
And wheeling southwards on the Roman flank,
Cut deep into the legion's quivering heart.
The shouts came faintly to our ears across
The misty meadows ; and above the mist,
Small on the dark side of the distant hill,
Where the dim shadow of a purple cloud
Flitted across, I saw the snow-white manes
And the blue glitter of the well-known sword.

The legion wavered ; and the serried ranks
Of shining helms fell back in hollow curves,
As fall the ripples of a sullen pool
Where, by the side, a runnel hastens in.
Then for a moment glancing down to still
The restless wailings of the drowsy child,
I lost the links of movement ; and before
My dazzled eyes could fit themselves again
To take the farther range, the snow-white manes
And the blue glitter of the well-known sword
Were lost, all trampled out confusedly
Like sparks upon the ground. Then wild with fear
I cast the child into her nurse's arms,
And springing down upon the level plain
Flew towards the river through the misty meads.
I ran as in a dream, on feet that felt
Nor weight nor weariness ; but only seemed
Like wings to the great fear that maddened me
And drove me forward. Now the mangled ground,
Furrowed and stamped where many wheels and feet
Had gathered closer, brought me to the ford ;
There, girding up my robes and flinging off
The slippery sandals from my feet, I plunged
Into the stream ; whose chilly waters numbed




My trembling ankles. Yet I struggled on
And gained the farther shore; without a pause
Pressed through the clustered footmen; flew between
The trampling horse; threaded the perilous space,
Narrow and shifting, 'twixt the rolling cars;
Caught at the bridles of the tossing heads
That scattered showers of foam, and held them back,
And sprang between the cruel hoofs and wheels;
Deaf to the friendly shouts of those before,
More deaf to the fierce threats of those behind,
Warning me back. Above the thundering cars,
Clearer than all the clashing of the steel,
And more articulate than any speech,
I heard the terror whisper in my heart
That shaped its voice like Owain's dying moan.
But when I gained the spot where glittered last
His waving sword against the dark hill side,
The Romans had arisen, and charging down
The western slopes had left the southern strewn
With the dread wreck of battle. There I found
Him whom I sought; but ask not what I found.
For while I speak once more the darkness comes,
The black, black night that then fell suddenly
On my stunned heart and brain."

Hereat she paused

And reeling, seemed about to swoon away,
While her dark hair swept forward heavily.
But thrusting Julius' friendly arm aside,
She leant her trembling frame against the tree,
Flung the long locks behind, and gasped for breath;
Then gathering up her forces spoke again,
With pale but resolute lips.

“ I knew no more,

Till the soft tears of pitying twilight fell
Upon my face, and I awoke again.
As one who walking in a pleasant place,
In midst of sunshine, flowers, and singing birds,
And murmuring happy fancies to himself,
Suddenly falls into a treacherous pit
Hid by the smiling herbage, and drops down
Mangled and stunned upon the dreary floor;
So from my pleasant path of life I fell,
Suddenly fell; and as that wretched man
After a while begins to stir again,
Painfully moves his miserable limbs,
And marvels at the darkness and the pain;
Then with dim eyes up-gazing to the brink,
Where the wide heavens show dwindled to a point,



By slow degrees draws through his shattered sense
The notion of his fall, so I awoke,
So slowly traced my anguish to its cause.
But in the midst of misery, the thought
Of Gladys glided in athwart my brain,
Even as a lonely star might glide across
That far-off speck and aperture of sky,
Revealed by darkness to the hapless man,
And seem to lure him from his last despair.
I looked around me ; but the deepening night
Hid all the distance ; save that far below
A trembling gleam showed where the Sabren fled
To hide her blood-stained waters in the sea ;
Save that beyond the stream the heavens turned pale
Behind the spectral pines upon the knoll,
Whose dusky arms seemed beckoning me to leave
The lifeless sire, and seek the living child.
Then down the slopes I went as in a dream,
Slow stumbling through the dark among the tracks
Of wheels and hoofs, slipping in blackened pools
That made me shudder, till I reached the ford
And climbed the knoll ; but Gladys was not there,
Nor yet my maids. But even then my heart
Held its dull peace ; and still as in a dream

I struggled up the windings of the vale
Through that long autumn night, until the dark
Began to fold and gather here and there,
Showing the blasted oak upon the crag,
Above our mountain home. Then in that hour—
That grey, foreboding hour when happy men
Fondly deceive their souls, and dream they hear
In the faint sounds and movements that begin
On every side to stir the quiet air,
Earth's drowsy answer to the call of hope
That wakens her to greet the rising sun;—
In that most dreary hour I passed within
The desolate door, and trod the silent hall,
Where never more should Owain's voice be heard,
Where never more his feet should come again.
Yet this I rather said for her who swooned
The yester-eve beside her husband's corse,
Than felt as she who mourned his loss to-day;
For from the dust my soul had risen to leave
The lifeless sire, and seek the living child.

“ Close in the corner of an inner room
A figure crouched, that neither moved nor spoke,
Yet looked like Angharad,—my fairest maid,
Promised to valiant Cynfrân as his bride,—

Like, yet how different ! For some ghastly change
Had passed upon her : some mysterious cloud
Hung on her face, and dulled the laughing eyes
That once were clear as day. Yet from behind
That conscious cloud there sparkled out the light
Of a most innocent, indignant soul.

Some wrong that writhed out of the reach of words,
Yet still clung close to loathing memory,
So seemed to gnaw her heart, I feared to ask
Its shape or name ; and for a moment's space
My toiling anguish paused to pity hers.

Then did I speak to her ;—‘ O Angharad,
O Angharad the clear-eyed, answer me !
Where is my child ? ’ Slowly she lifted up
Her heavy looks and brought them to my face ;
So,—poring on it like a child who pores
On a familiar form in some disguise,—
Found me at length behind my mask of woe,
And in her startled glance I read my change.
Then, maddened with suspense, again I cried,
‘ By the three sacred rays which Einig saw
I charge thee,—tell where I may find my child.’
‘ I know not,’ she made answer, sinking back
Into that sullen, self-devouring mood :

Then bowing down her face upon her knees
Till the long waves of shining chestnut hair
Fell round her like a veil, she spoke again :—
' O thank the gods that she is yet a child.'

' I did not weep ; but close and closer still
The leaden weight pressed down my sinking brain,
The senseless slumber lay upon my soul :
A slumber broken by the mournful cries
And wild upbraidings of some second self
That dwelt within the tomb of what I was.
Life ceased to flow like as the Hebsta flows,—
Now over sounding falls, now in calm pools,
Here glancing in the sun, o'ershadowed there
Below the hanging woods, but always seen,
And always linked in one unbroken course ;—
It fell apart disjointed from itself.
Even as the Mellta, that mysteriously
Slips underground,—to pour her amber waves
Through caverns where the cheerful beams of
day
Come never, issuing to the light again
Unlooked for in some far-off valley's side ;—
So did the mournful current of my days
Begin to lose its sequence in the dark,

And spring to daylight once again, at wide
And unexpected intervals, as now.

“ In that same hour I turned my weary feet,
Forth wandering, all unwitting where I went,
To find my child. Twelve times the flowing sap
Has settled in a larger ring around
The girth of the great forest trees ; yet still
I seek my child, and still have found her not,
Thus still I wander on, unwitting where,
To find my child : and this is all my tale.”

She ceased : the last vibration of her voice
Died out upon the air, that settled smooth
In utter silence. Then that silence roused
The listeners like a trumpet call ; for lo !
They had not seen the setting sun withdraw
The level ray that gilt the grassy ridge
When the sad mother's dolorous tale began.
They had not heard the faint, unfinished songs,
The small, soft rustlings of the wings and feet,
Of nesting birds among the underwood ;
Nor felt the chill, moist air, whose poisoned robe
Was folding close and closer round their limbs.
For far away to other scenes and times
That mournful voice had lured their pitying souls,

So that the vacant senses left behind
Saw not, nor heard, nor felt. Now with a start
The wandering powers were at their post and knew
That night had fallen.

Then did the Maccabee,
True to himself, shake off the irksome weight
Of powerless pity ; and with a light spring
Mounted the crômlech, crying,

“ It were well

To find our pathway to the sheltering hut
Ere the last streak of day fades in the West.
This is the mound, the altar, and the tree
Of which prince Brân at parting spake to us.
‘ Stand on the stone,’ he said, ‘ and looking North
Mark well the western edge of the huge oak
That faces you. So marking, you shall find
A wound upon the bark ; telling the spot
Whence in old times a Druid’s hook, they say,
Severed the sacred plant. If a keen eye
Take aim through this, so shall it deftly light
At a league’s distance on a crooked ash
That bends beyond the corner of a wood.
Thither press on, and you shall find a track
Leading to shelter and a faithful friend.’

But if we tarry longer, I misgive,
"Twill take a keener eye than mine to light
At a league's distance upon anything."

"I come," said Julius, paying slender heed,
And thinking more of mournful Guendolen,
Who now again was sitting motionless
As first they saw her ; her close folding arms
Clasping her knees ; her coldly woful looks
Silently saying,—' This my grief is mine
And not another's, therefore stand aloof.'

But Julius sighed and laid a gentle hand
On the dark wreaths of her disordered hair,
Saying,—“ My daughter, may the Highest One,
He whom your bards and Druids blindly serve,
Bless thee, and bring thee all thy heart's desire.”
Then paused, withdrew his hand, and spake again :
“ The All-mighty is All-merciful. Our pain
Is not His pleasure. Love, and joy, and peace,
Such are His whispers in the soul of man,
Heard in all times though seldom understood.
But now the whisper swells into a voice
That tops all sound beside. For wondrous things
Have happened in the far-off Summer-land
That lies in light beyond the central sea,

The land whence sprung the fathers of your race.
There God, a suffering man with suffering man,
Has walked the weary pathways of the world,
Alluring by majestic tenderness
All longing, restless souls to lean on Him.
Behold ! He beckons now : the mighty hand
That in its secret hollow holds the sea,
Scoops out the heavens, feeds the fire of the sun
And rolls the planets, is a friendly hand
That delicately guides thy small concerns.
It flings away the robe of mystery,
Lessens itself to suit thy feeble grasp,
And fain would lift the burden of thy cares.
Trust it : ay, trust the skilful hand of Him
Who made thee : trust the pitiful heart to which
Thou art more dear than Gladys to thine own.
Speak to Him now : He needs no noise of words,
But hears the silent wishes of the heart.
He knows the darkened eyes and erring feet
Are weak to find the way to His embrace,
And comes Himself to fetch the wanderer home.”
She answered nothing, and the drooping wing
Of silence sank again. Then a low sob
Lifted it tremblingly, her fingers loosed

Their straining clasp, and all her sultry griefs
Broke up in showers of kindly tears that fell
Unseen, behind the shadow of her arms.

Then Julius feared to touch the tender bloom
Of these first-fruits, or mar with meddling words
The happy wonder of a waking soul ;
And therefore sealed his lips, except to say,
“ Farewell ; but when this moon that glimmers now
A narrow crescent through the shifting clouds,
Has rounded to the full, her light shall fall
Upon the path that leads us here again.”

Meanwhile the keen eye of the Maccabee
Had found the ancient wound upon the bark,
And deftly lighted on the bending ash
That marked the promised shelter ; and he stood
Impatient to depart. But when he heard
Julius' farewell,—as ever quick to feel
The need and find the expedient of the hour,—
He turned with hasty gestures to his friend,
Saying in voluble phrases of the Greek
That wrapt the sense from Guendolen,

“ Not so :

All thou hast taught, all she has learned were vain,
If now we leave her in the wilderness

Alone, and at the mercy of herself,
The prey of dark conceits. Didst thou not mark
How at the very outset of her tale
She spake of Llyr as grandsire to her lord?
If this be so, his sire was Brân himself;
His brother, royal Caradoc; and thus
The shelter we are bound for were as fit,
As open, for her homeless head as ours."

"Yea, true," said Julius meekly, "I am shamed
Of this my blindness. Verily, it is hard
To balance the nice scales of thought and fact,
Action and meditation. Evermore
We find that we have cast a grain too much
Into the right or left, and this or that
Flies to the beam."

But waiting not to hear
These fine discernments delicately drawn,
Thus spake the Maccabee to Guendolen,
"O Lady, with a brother's faithful heart
I crave to serve thee. Far across the sea
A gentle wife thinks of me; lovely babes
Are taught to lip their absent father's name.
Therefore my heart grows tender at the thought
Of sorrows such as thine. We go from hence

To find a friendly roof in yonder wood.'
Now hearken to me, Lady ; come with us ;
And change this wildly-mournful solitude
For kindly faces of thy fellow men."

She fastened on his face a searching gaze
As thus he spoke. Then when he ceased arose,
And girt the ruined richness of her robes
About her stately form ; saying the while,—
" Yea, I will follow : all my soul is bent
To learn the worship of the God you serve.
But pass before ; and while I follow on,
Speak not nor look behind ; for if perchance
The hateful thing should track me, I must face
Its last assault alone."

She waved them on,
And they set forward. But a shadow sat
Upon the Maccabee ;—" Far be it from me,"
He cried, as Julius joined him on the path,
" To soften down, as thou, the hellish freaks
Of their false priests and falser gods ; as if
Falsehood were but another name for truth ;
Foulness for purity ; blood-thirstiness
For love and pity. Rather let my arm
Strike boldly at the bitter root, and cast

Alone, and at the mercy of herself,
The prey of dark conceits. Didst thou not mark
How at the very outset of her tale
She spake of Llyr as grandsire to her lord?
If this be so, his sire was Brân himself;
His brother, royal Caradoc; and thus
The shelter we are bound for were as fit,
As open, for her homeless head as ours."

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We find that we have cast a grain too much
Into the right or left, and this or that
Flies to the beam."

But waiting not to hear
These fine discernments delicately drawn,
Thus spake the Maccabee to Guendolen,
"O Lady, with a brother's faithful heart
I crave to serve thee. Far across the sea
A gentle wife thinks of me; lovely babes
Are taught to lisp their absent father's name.
Therefore my heart grows tender at the thought
Of sorrows such as thine. We go from hence

And hurl him from his knees, as if I scorned
His sacred yearnings ? Shall I snatch the straw
Out of the drowning hand, before I guide
Its eager clasp to the far-reaching boughs
Of the strong tree of Life ? ”

“ To hear thee speak, ”

The younger answered, “ one would think that all
The vilest worship of the vilest gods
Of heathendom, were something sound at base ;
A gentle error, not a damning sin.
Bold-faced rebellion, foaming out its shame
In loud defiance, ranks in thy soft phrase
As something specious. Thou would’st call the swine
That tramples in the mire the tender plant,
The prop that stays its weakness. Thou would’st call
The cruel reptile lurking in the reeds,
A straw at which the drowning man may catch,
With small advantage but as little hurt. ”

“ Alas, ” said Julius, “ thou but beat’st the wind ;
Or at the best the empty robe of words
From whence the spirit of my argument
Flits forth unscathed, untouched, unrecognized.
But let us tempt it back. As far from me
As thee, to soften as thou seem’st to fear


The hellish freaks of heathendom : as if
Falsehood were but another name for truth ;
Foulness for purity ; blood-thirstiness
For love and pity. Yet be well assured
There never was successful counterfeit
But bare a certain semblance to the true,
Was framed on the idea of the true,
And by that semblance and idea kept
Its hold upon the world. The false, the foul,
The cruel, of the heathen gods would soon
Fall of themselves and crumble into dust ;
But that beneath there lurks a vital Truth ;
So strong that even the most crushing weight
Of error heaped upon it but benumbs
Its outer workings, cannot quench the life
That throbs and glows within. That truth is this :—
That there is Power above us, felt not seen :
A Power before whose breath we are less strong
Than the light chaff of summer threshing-floors
Before the hurricane, a Power to which
We owe allegiance. Let our task be this :—
To tear asunder the corrupting veil,
And let the struggling life escape, to find
A home in purer forms. Meanwhile, my son,

We know not, truly, if our brother's fault
Be gentle error or a damning sin.
But this we know ;—that what we rightly call
The one true knowledge of the one true God,
Revealed to Moses, perfected in Christ,
Is but a shadow of the Truth itself,
A finite symbol of the Infinite.
Yet if a symbol, one divinely given ;
And therefore to be hoarded in our hearts
As sacred treasure : yea, more precious far
Than all our fine-spun after-thoughts : a thing
In which to live our life ; or, if needs be,
For which to die ; with holy modesty
That dreams not we have scaled the heavens, that owns
We see not Him who is invisible,
Save as reflected in the small, dim glass
Of our low thoughts ; which still is small and dim
Though his enlightening Spirit pour thereon
Its condescending beams. Perchance, my son,
Our noblest thoughts of God fall farther short
Of the pure splendours of His Infinite
Than does the meanest heathen thought, of ours."

But still the other answered—" Pardon me
For harping still upon this weary string ;—

But speaking thus, thou mak'st our sacred ark
That rides alone above a drowning world
One of a happy fleet, all homeward bound.
Yea, speaking thus, may God forgive the word,
Thou mak'st Jove true, only less true than Christ,
Or else Christ false, only less false than Jove."

Then Julius, under breath,—“Nay, God forbid !”
And pausing on the rugged path he sighed,
Sighed out of utter loneliness of soul :
That deepest and most desert solitude,
That farthest exile, when the chosen friend
Is close beside, to hand, and eye, and ear,
Yet severed from us by a boundless gulf.
His baffled spirit stretched her empty arms,
Despairing, to the vague and cold embrace
Of nature ; but she held upon her way,
Vast, inarticulate, immoveable,
Brooding on deeper sorrows of her own.
And darker still the sombre twilight fell ;
The faint moon-crescent glimmered fainter still
Behind the murky vapours ; a white bird
Flitted half seen across the watercourse ;
And the sad earth sighed through the fading trees
That loomed in masses on the farther shore.



Then thought the other,—to whom Julius' mood
Was as a colour to a blind man's eye,—
'Something has chafed him ; let me change the
theme.'

So when the old man turned serene looks round
And they went forward, with a softened voice
Began the younger :—" Thou did'st speak anon
To this lorn mother of some spiritual child
Held captive in the snares of wicked men.
Prythee, who is this maiden ? never yet
Hast thou so much as named her name to me."

" Friend," answered Julius, " she is one of whom
My heart speaks rather than my lips, and more
To God than man." " Nay," said the Maccabee,
" The nearer that a matter lies to the heart
The fitter to be shared by the heart's friend."
" True," groaned the other, " if that your heart's friend
Be capable to share it ; but like love,
Friendship full oft cleaves to its opposite,
And cleaves the closer for the difference.
Yet in this mystery do partings lie,
As well as meetings : dangerous variance,
As well as safe accord : mournful farewells
Of soul to soul across a widening gulf

As well as clasped hands and eternal vows.
But for this girl, in whom is garnered up
My childless heart, hers is a tale soon told,
And since thou crav'st to hear it, I will tell.

“ She is the child of Aulus Plautius :
The veteran general who when Llyr was king
Beat back the British forces, and returned
In proud ovation ; with the emperor
Riding at his right hand ; the mellow flutes
Warbling around ; his charger's pawing hoofs
Deep in strewn flowers ; and far as eye could see,
From the field of Mars on to the Capitol,
His army, rich with trophies, myrtle-crowned,
Pouring through ranks of shouting citizens.
All unaware how at that very hour
The cry of battle rang along the coasts
Of the white island ; that the Cymric powers
Had risen again ; and Caradoc had won
More than his grandsire lost.

“ Now since that day
Has Plautius dwelt in Rome, and with him dwell
His noble wife Pomponia, and their child,
The bright-haired Claudia. It is said in Rome,
She is not theirs by any tie of blood ;

But let that pass. She was a wondrous child,
Full of still radiance. When Pomponia
Turned from the heathen rites to worship God,
And with a trembling heart began to break
The mighty change to Claudia,—telling her
Of God and Christ—or ere the child had heard
More than the briefest outline, she arose,
And with a calm face answered, ‘ Yea, I know :
This is the God who hears me when I pray.
He dwells beyond the incense and the shrines,
And draws me closer, closer, up to Him.
I have loved Him always, knowing not His name ;
But now I know it I will serve Him too.’
And this Pomponia told me ; and I came,
Saw the fair child, spake with her, and did find
Most surely that the Spirit of the Lord
Had taken of His truth and shown it her
In the transparent silence of her soul.
But ever with most sweet humility
She sat as at my feet, desiring still
To learn : unguessing how I craved the while
Rather to learn from her. So time went on ;
And evermore the promise of her soul
Grew riper, till I saw that she was one

Fashioned for glorious ends. But as a frost
Descends untimely on the buds of March,
So did the blighting breath of a merciless world
Fall on this flower of Heaven. Her plastic soul
Moulded a most fair dwelling for itself.
I have no skill to paint in gaudy words
A maiden's beauty. This is all I know ;—
That she was lovelier than the loveliest,
As gentle and as graceful as a fawn,
As soft in tint and outline as a flower ;
And the still star-like radiance of her looks
Maddened all Rome with love, weary to death
Of brazen brows, and lavish smiles, and eyes
Bright with base meanings. So while yet a child
Her father promised her without her will
To Pudens of the order of the knights :
The best of all her suitors ; yet as far
From Claudia as a muddy pool is far
From the pure planet shining on its face.
Then when with quiet tears and earnest words
She craved to be left free, he turned his wrath
On me and on Pomponia ; swore by Jove
That we had plagued her fancy with crude fears
Bred of our gloomy faith, and bade me go

And never more darken his palace-doors.
As for his noble wife, he prisoned her
In her own dwelling, holding her apart
From converse with the darling of her soul.
And now the illustrious lady's enemies,—
For many hated her, whose holy light
Reproached their darkness,—finding that she lay
Under the fierce displeasure of her lord,
Took heart against her, who had seemed before
Too high a quarry for their mean assaults.
Now they accused her that she had embraced
A foreign superstition, and required
That she should answer for it to her lord.
So Plautius, following the ancient law,
Summoned her kindred, and before them all
Tried her for life and fame. But in the end,
The majesty and meekness of her words,
Given in that hour by Him who ever walks
Beside His chosen in the baffled fire ;
And her unspotted life, that shone the more
The more they pried into her secret ways ;
So wrought upon him that he cast aside
The accusers' charge, pronounced her innocent
Of any wrongful courses, and restored

His favour to her. But still resolute
That Claudia shall not suffer further taint
From this new faith, he holds her sternly yet
From her illustrious mother ; circles her
With gay companions, fills her nights and days
With songs and dances, garlands, gay attire,
And passionate wooers whispering vanity
In her unguarded ears. Then say, my son,
Have I not lost my child ?—and is she not
Held captive in the snares of wicked men ?”

“ Alas, my father, thou hast cause to grieve,”
The other answered ; “ ’tis a grievous thing
To see a dear soul for the which Christ died
Tossed as a plaything in the enemy’s hand.
Yet what were thine own words to Guendolen ?—
That ‘ the all-seeing One, who gave the child
Still has her in His ken though far from thine.’
Thus medicine thine own grief : remembering too
That even our Captain’s armour was annealed
By fiery conflict in the wilderness,
Then how much more should ours ? If, as thou
deem’st,

She has been fashioned for a glorious end,
Most needful was it that her spiritual strength

Be tested sharply. Yet I marvel much
What glorious end she can be fashioned for,
A mere, weak woman."

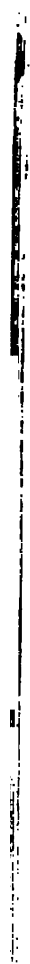
When he heard these words
A slow smile breaking over Julius' soul
Rose like the dawn and overflowed his face,
As thus he answered,—

"Marvellest thou, my son?

Truly the world and all the ways of God
Are full of marvels. Not the least is this,
That all the mightiest forces that compel
Matter and spirit in their destined grooves
Are silent and unseen. "Perchance, my son,
Your 'mere, weak woman' may be one of these.
Truly she is the mother of us all.
All noble thoughts and pure imaginings,
Incarnated in her, swell in her soul
In darkness, till the growing time is rife
For birth in the activities of man.
Yea, it is possible the Wisest One
May not have erred in trusting to her hands
The fortunes of our race, trusting to her
The pregnant, pliant years of infancy."


So spake the generous Julius; while a spark

That almost looked like scorn brightened his eyes,
And to his words the voluble Maccabee
Answered in such unanswerable sort
He could but smile once more and hold his peace.



PART IV.


Now as they talked, a turning in the path
Revealed a crooked ash which bent beyond
The corner of the wood. Cheered by the sign
They crossed the stream, and round about the tree
Searched the close thicket. But the place was dark,
Dark with the double shade of eventide
And overhanging trees, and baffled them.
Till bending to the ground the Maccabee
Found a faint track, and following the track
The trees withdrew, leaving a level turf
Between their ranks, grateful to way-worn feet.
Now too their ears grew happy with a sound
That made them hasten, gathering as they went



The growing clue, until at length they saw
A rustic lodge, dim-outlined in the dusk,
But all alive within with rosy light
That sparkled through each crevice in the walls,
And drew them on the faster. From this lodge
The music came ; which as they drew more near
Divided to a double melody :
The voice of one who made herself a child
To please her babe, and the babe's dovelike voice
In wordless answers. Then the Maccabee,
Heart-tendered with the thought of those at home,
Crept noiselessly towards the wedge of light
That split the darkness near the unlatched door ;
And Julius following, they both stood mute
Peering within. Unconscious of their gaze
A peasant woman stood before the hearth,
Erect, elastic ; and her rounded arms
Shone in the firelight as she tossed a babe,
That held its fluttering breath at each ascent,
But crowed and babbled as her careful arms
Caught it again in safety to her breast.
Again, again, she tossed the laughing child,
And answered it in baby-syllables,
With merry turns of voice and flashing smiles.

But soon the child's voice faltered, and soft clouds
Began to gather in its drooping eyes.
At which the mother ceased her merriment
And pressed it to her bosom, sinking down
On a low stool. Then waving to and fro
With slumberous movement, sang a lullaby
Framed in her first delight of motherhood.

“Aye, sleep, my darling, sleep!
Thy tender soul soon tires
Of this our life. Though large and bright to me,
’Tis small and dim to thee,
Fresh from the Heaven to which my soul aspires,
But has forgotten long.
And therefore often thou withdraw’st and diest
Out of thy little temple here, and flyest
Back to thy glorious home;
Beneath whose dome
O happy, swift-winged, homeward flying swallow,
Thou hast thy lasting rest.
A softer, fairer nest
Than even this which lies upon my breast
So vacant and so still.
But over which I will,



Whilst thou art absent, faithful watches keep.
And all the time thy blissful flight I'll follow
In a soft murmured song.

“ Aye, sleep, my darling, sleep !
I see thee mounting far.
The light grows brighter on thy earnest wings
And richer radiance flings
About thy path. Above the highest star
Thou risest easily,
Upward, still upward, through the pale blue
foldings
Of the air-curtains, till the golden mouldings
Of the ever open door
Glitter before
Thy quiet eyes, undazzled yet enraptured.
And through that open door
The angel-children pour
Their silvery songs of welcome evermore.
And now they crowd around
Their newly lost and found
To question if thy homely service keep
Thee longer from them, sorrowfully captured
By time, and sin, and me.

“Aye, sleep, my darling, sleep !
Sun thy chilled soul awhile
In the warm splendour of the living ray
Which makes eternal day.
Yea ! sun thyself in the life-giving smile
Of the eternal love.
But O ! I charge thee ! do not fondly hearken
To those bright playmates’ pleadings : my eyes darken
With undropped tears, to think
How life would shrink
To nothingness if thou wert gone for ever.
Tell them,—thy course though low
Slips with a softened flow
Through banks of sweetness theirs can never know ;
Tell them,—thou hast but done
As did the Holy One ;
Who left the calm of Heaven that he might reap
Out of the fields of sorrow, joy that never
Could else be stored above.

“Aye, sleep, my darling, sleep !
Meanwhile thy silent lips,
Left open like the cage to tempt the dove,
Are eloquent with love.

And from their pure, fresh fountain my soul sips
Lessons of peace and rest.
From these dear arms, for ever fondly turning,
Even in slumber, towards me, I am learning
In every time and state
Meekly to wait
Upon the care of the eternal Father ;
And to feel after Him
When all besides is dim,
When in a sea of doubt my fancies swim
And faith's strong arm grows numb.
When hurtful phantoms come
And through the curtains of thy slumber peep,
Thou dost not struggle from me, but dost rather
Cling closer to my breast."

As the song ceased, a heavy hasty step
Came crushing through the brushwood ; and Cadair,
The faithful herdsman of the captive prince,
Strode sternly towards the pilgrims. But the ring
On Ilid's finger cleared his brow, and turned
The fierce demand that started to his lips
Into a cordial welcome. At his voice
Estrildis rose, laid down the sleeping babe,

And flew to greet him, glancing bashfully
At those two strangers.

But as thus she came,
The meaning of her countenance was changed,
And with a startled look that overshot
The pilgrims and Cadair, she fixed her gaze
On something in the rear. Then,—as they turned
To see the scope of those wide-opened eyes,—
She sprang beyond them all, fell down before
The feet of Guendolen, embraced her knees,
And cried aloud amidst her happy tears ;—
“ O is it thou ? my lady Guendolen !
How have I prayed for this ! and wilt thou deign
To shelter 'neath our roof the stately head
That I have mourned as houseless, bare to all
The buffets of the storm without, within.
My soul is lost in joy and gratitude
That cannot speak in words.”


Then Guendolen
Lifted her up and pressed her in her arms
With kind caresses ; saying,—“ Yea, I come,
But not as deigning, Estrild ; not to bow
A stately head : that pride has passed away.
The father-God has found me : He has sent

His servants and has brought me home to Him.
If He himself walked as a man with men
Along the common pathways of the world,
What then am I, to wrap my wounded soul
In solitary state of proud disdain,
And waste to death away from all my kind ?
Therefore I leave the desolate wilds wherein
My soul has been the prey of evil thoughts.
Sorrow may still be mine, but not despair.
For if I find my child or find her not,
She is not lost ; and in the after-world
Gladys shall nestle in my arms again.
And as for thy lost daughter," as she spoke
She turned to Julius, " she whom thou dost mourn
As captive in the snares of wicked men,
The light that blends the future with the past
And makes one lucid present of our lives
Has shone for me, and shows that in the hour
I clasp my child, thine will be rescued too.
Or here or in the blessed after-world
The parents and the children meet again."

Here then in Cadair's hut for five long years
The pilgrims made their central home ; while far
Along the terraced mountain-paths, and down

The deep secluded vales ; over bleak heaths,
And through the tangled marshes of the coast ;
From southern Isca by the tawny sea
To where the Sacred Island fronts the north ;
From th' eastern streams to where the unknown main
Breaks on the western shores ; their patient feet
Passed and repassed, blessing the land they trod.
From time to time, with many an anxious space
Lengthening between, came news from distant Rome.
Letters from Miriam, full of tender talk
Of babes and home and kindred. Letters too
From Brân the prince and Caradoc the king,
Who ere a year had passed avowed himself
A willing vassal of the conquering Christ,
And passed through mystic waters to His side :
Letters from all save Claudia. But of her
Nothing but dubious rumours of the snares
That thickened round her feet : nothing to cheer
The heart of Julius, who still mourned for her
As one who mourns an only, darling child
Dying unsuccoured on a distant shore.

But whether they rejoiced for Caradoc,
Or wept for Claudia, still their steadfast souls
Were true to their high calling ; still they sought



The scattered Cymri in their secret haunts,
And found them stern and sad, rent off by force
From the old rule and worship of the land ;
Scorning their conquerors much ; but scorning more
The childish herd who, dazzled by success,
Grovelled before them ; scorning most of all
The few, base-hearted, howe'er nobly born,
Who, guessing at the issue ere the fight,
Had knit a shameful treaty with the foe ;
And now reaped golden harvests from the fields
Watered with Cymric blood.

In such a mood

The pilgrims found the noblest of the land :
Whether the simple herdsman who scarce knew
His grandsire's name, or prince whose long descent
Baffled the practised memories of the bards :
Herdsman or prince, still noblest of the land.
And fitting well their words to such a mood,
And fitting well their actions to their words,—
Not by a painful piecing here and there,
But by the easy outgrowth of the heart,—
They drew from many a deeply wounded soul
The venom of its misery, and poured
Into its smarting hurts a triple balm :

The balm of trust in the Eternal Power
That fashions all things to their fittest end :
Of trust in the Eternal Love that lives,
And dies, and rises ever in the worlds ;
That late had taken human form to live
More lovingly among us, and to die
More sadly for us, and to rise again
More radiantly before us : and of trust
In the Eternal Holiness which breathes
A rarer life within the soul, nor rests
Till all the being is attuned to God.

And ever as they taught would Julius hang
His teaching on the teachings of the bards ;
Would note the solid beams that still upheld
Their tottering temple, and essay to drive
The nail of doctrine in the surest place.
While, true as Julius to the differing type,
The Maccabee tore down the old beliefs,
And built the shining palace of the King
Sheer from the earth on unencumbered ground,
With no misgivings of the depths below.
Yet not in craft, but by a natural choice
Thus did the pilgrims. Even as the pine,
Shooting abruptly to the gracious sun,

Fringes his spiry height with russet cones ;
While standing in close brotherhood, the oak,
Slow-rising on his broadened base of roots,
Thoughtfully bends his knotted arms, and moulds
A polished acorn finely here and there.

So each was faithful to his proper trust ;
So each was fruitful in his proper kind.
And as they passed about the Cymric wilds
They sowed immortal seed. But then as now
Not all the soil was fruitful. Then as now
The many who with open hearts embraced
The heavenly message, seemed but few to those
Who held them closely barred. For some were loath
To satisfy the hunger of their souls
With any Bread of Life unless they knew
The title to the field where grew the wheat,
Though all the while the inner instinct cried,
“ Alas ! I perish while thou cavillest.”
Some closed their hearts through jealous reverence
For all their fathers revered of old.
Unmindful that the present sees the past
Such as it would, and throws a shifting light
Now here, now there, upon the narrowing track
Unrolled behind, while vaster intervals

Lie buried in the shade. Unmindful too
That not the distant years that are no more,
But these, the very days in which we live,
Are earth's old age :—that not our sires but we
Are the true ancients, on whose hoary heads
Time heaps his snows. But more, even as now,
Held back through utter earthliness : they saw
No beauty in the things unseen, nor felt
Their thrilling touch reach to the inmost soul,
Nor heard their still small voice, that overtops
To hearing ears the thunders of the world.

Thus through the mourning land the pilgrims went,
And on her mountains swathed in tearful mists
Their soiled and weary feet were beautiful.
But in the midst of mighty thoughts, and aims
That stretched beyond the confines of the world,
They still remembered Guendolen, and still
Sought for her long-lost child. Yea, more than once,—
When worn with months of pilgrimage they came
To rest awhile within the herdsman's hut,
Where still she dwelt with Estrild and Cadair,—
Some glimpse of gold upon a maiden's head
Shining among the dark Silurian girls,
As shines some sunny-blossomed tree among

- Its sombre woodland peers, turned them aside
To learn its owner's history. And in days
So gloomed with exile, treachery, and war,
Full many a Cymric orphan might be found
Whose brief life held a world of mystery.
Whose memory faintly traced benignant forms
That moved and smiled about her infant years,
Then slipped into the dark and came no more.
But ever as they searched into the tale
Some ruthless fact destroyed the lengthening clue,
And fair-haired Gladys, almost grasped, was gone.

Meanwhile how slowly crept the days, the months,
The fearful years to Claudia, far away
Within the wicked city of the South.
For on her shrinking spirit closely pressed
The evil powers : the creeping hosts which haunt
The lower grounds of our frail being, and those
Whose proud wings darken all the upper air
Where the mind breathes. Not only in her home
The shadows deepened on her daily life,
The snares grew thicker round her trembling feet ;
But all the broad horizon of the times
Now gathered blackness. Vilest cruelty
And viler luxury sapped the state, till Rome


Became one ghastly pitfall, ill-concealed
By glittering shows. The dull-souled Clandius
Had passed away ; and in his stead arose
A madman by whose whitest deeds the worst
Wrought by his sire seemed pure and merciful ;
Yet the degenerate city fawned and crouched
At Nero's feet. An ever-dwindling few,
Still faithful to the spirit of the past,
Might worship virtue secretly and mourn
The apostate times. But growing throngs on throngs,—
Senators, ladies of the noblest lines,
Knights of great name, rich freedmen, and a host
Of hired plebeians,—courted greedily
The gilded wheels that ground them in the dust.
In such a scene she dwelt : as much alone
As a sane man immured with maniacs :
And but for Him whose presence like a dove
Brooded for ever on her troubled thoughts,
The wild despairs and fearful merriments
Had with a horrid fascination drawn
Her soul into the gulf. But still through all
His strength upheld her. Yea, at times it took
A shape of human succour. More than once
When her last spark of hope was almost quenched,

Her latest door of rescue seemed fast barred,
The spirit of Brân would reach her through the dark.
Divine her perils, and provide escape.
Or else Pomponia by a faithful slave,
Or by a sign when at the daily board
They met in terror of the watchful gleam
That shot from under Plautius' shaggy brows,
Would warn her darling. Or more strange than all,
Pudens himself, her dearest, worst of foes,
Would shine as her deliverer. For the knight,—
Though armed with all her sire's authority
To seize on Claudia and to bear her home,
His promised bride, spite of her wilfulness ;
And urged yet more by his own passionate heart
That doted on her beauty, doting still
Through years of disappointment ;—ever found
His resolution daunted and withheld
As by an unseen power, so that he shrank
Out of her sight abashed.

So passed the years,
Four seeming endless years, since Julius went.
And in the fifth the evil powers closed round
Her trembling spirit for a last assault.

The spring breathed softly on the flowery world

Around the pleasant farm at Tusculum
Where Plautius bore her, and it seemed to melt
The firmness of her purpose. Then a voice,
A flattering voice, said sweetly in herself,—
‘Do I not wrong kind Nature? Can it be
That these melodious musics of the world;
These lovely forms and hues that swell and shine
On every side; these most delicious scents
And flavours; these caresses of the breeze,
And of this soft turf where my limbs subside
With such an easy languor;—can it be
That all these things are prophecies in vain?
Lo! I have fasted many days, and made
This fruitful world a barren wilderness;
But God made all things good, and good for me.
Let me fling back the fivefold door of sense
And look abroad; yea, taste and handle all
That makes life worth the living. Why? my heart,
Why wast thou framed so softly, but to take
Impression from another, stronger heart?
When Pudens speaks, why does my every nerve
Thrill at his voice? Who strung my being thus?
Not I but God; Whom yet I think to serve
By flat denial of the tender claim.




If Pudens' love were like the lawless love
Of others, there were cause to shrink from it ;
But is he not my own betrothed, and I
Bound to him by the will of Plantius,
Whom God has set above me as my sire ?
My disobedience and my wilfulness
Drive him to deeper darkness, make him hate
The light that leads me from him ; but methinks,
My hand in his upon the path of life,
He were a ready convert to my zeal.'

And Claudia listened while the flattering voice
Poured on, with many a pensive pause between,
Its subtle music in her secret ear.
Music more ravishingly sweet than songs
Of the shy bird whose fitful, luscious notes
Thrill the rich twilights of the early June.
And as she listened her young heart confessed
Its weakness, and implored her to relent.
But dumbly resolute her spirit fell
Before the unseen shrine, and rose again
Renewed and vigorous, armed with holy thoughts.
Then thus she answered to the tempting voice :—
'Nay, liar as thou wast from evermore,
Man lives not by the lifeless bread alone,|

But by the living word. Each several sense
May revel in a full satiety,
And yet the essence of the man grow lean
And starve to perishing. And each may lack
Its object, yet the inner soul rejoice
In rich abundance of delight and peace.
But one thing thou say'st truly. God has made
All Nature good ; yea, good for me, for all :
Good, not the best : a more transcendent good
He sets before the senses of the soul :
To grow through discipline of loss and pain,—
Yea, may be through a discipline of joy,—
Into His likeness. Dost thou mock at me ?
O cruel tempter ! asking of my heart—
Why not for *thee* this discipline of joy ?
My heart is weak and cannot answer thee ;
But my soul answers boldly to thy face,
I know not ; but I know that earthly joy
For me as yet is a forbidden thing :
A blooming fruit which my rash hand would crush
To bitter ashes. Wherefore get thee hence.'

The tempting voice that spoke within her heart
Was silent after this a little space.
The days passed on, the heavy April rains



Saddened the skies, and all her spirit sank
In chill depression. Then it spoke again :
No more in flattering tones, but with a hard,
Metallic ring of self-abandonment :—
' Yea, 'tis too true. I erred, wooing myself
To taste the sweetness I must never know.
I am a miserable, orphaned wretch
Without a home, a country, or a name.
Doubtless my Maker has forgotten me.
What boots to Him my petty faithfulness ?
I, a poor atom in the rolling mass,
The long procession of the lives of men,
Of what account am I in such a sum,
Whose reckoning runs beyond my farthest thought ?
Can the light feather of my littleness,
Laid here or there, be strong to discompose
The balance of the skies ? And if my God
Cared for my safety, would He snatch away
My main support, my father Julius,
Yea, and Pomponia, mother of my love,
And leave me all unguided and alone ?
That were mere madness. Nay, it is most plain
Sooner or later I must yield and fall.
Then why not now, and save myself at least

The miserable dread ? Moreover too,
If that I am, as once I fondly dreamed,
One of His chosen children, I am safe.'

And Claudia listened while the jarring voice
That spoke within the chamber of her heart
Rang its harsh changes on the true and false,
Until her soul grew dizzy and confused,
Until the solid ground of consciousness
Reeled round and seemed to open. Yet her soul,
Though sinking, sank before the feet of God
And rose re-strengthened, armed with holy thoughts.
Then thus she answered—

'Dost thou think to fright
My weakness thus, O coward enemy ?
True, God has given His angels charge to keep
My feet in all *my* ways, but not in *thine*.
My way lies only where my Lord appoints,
I may not tempt Him, choosing other paths.
And darrest thou to whisper in my heart
He loves me not, He cares not for my love,
My lord, who died a thousand deaths for me ?
Nay, though He slay me will I trust in Him.
The longest night must issue in the day,
The morning breaks already in my soul.'

Again, a little space, the voice that spoke
Within the chamber of her heart was still.
The days passed on, the glorious summer burst
From clear Italian skies, and Claudia felt
The pride of the rich season swell within.

Then spoke the evil spirit once again.
But neither in soft, flattering tones, nor yet
With a harsh ring of self-abandonment ;
But with a stirring, trumpet-like appeal,
That echoed from some higher place and seemed
To summon her to follow. Then she rose
Out of her meek abasement and went up
The mount of exaltation, while the voice
Sounded superbly, saying in her heart,—
' Methinks not many would have safely borne
The tests that try the temper of my mind,
Try but to prove its strength. But I begin
At length to know myself. The softnesses
That vanquish others come not near my soul :
They touch but on the surface of the sense
Like wandering birds that skim the unfathomed sea,
But leave no trace behind. And solitude
And sorrow do not conquer my resolves.
I feel within a self-contenting strength

Which never fails, though all things round me fail.
It were a most ungrateful modesty
To doubt my difference from my peers, and this
Hints at a difference in our destinies.
'Tis said they speak of me at Cæsar's court ;
That Martialis framed an epigram
Touching the gold locks and the violet eyes,
And how the Roman and the British dames
Disputed for the honour of my birth.
Strange things have happened in these days. Perchance
I yet might be Augusta, were it not
For this exclusive, almost sullen faith.
But 'twere an aim beneath me : deep within
I feel the stirring of strange powers that mock
At thrones and empires. Rather let me be
One of those rarely royal souls that take
Their times and fellows captive at their will,
By the resistless thought and wingéd word :
Nor only so, but stretch their sovereignty
O'er distant ages, races yet unborn.
How gloriously Apollo's statue stands !
Fair image of the thought that fires my soul ;
A graceful god ; divinely beautiful ;
Divinely free from sorrow ; whom no touch

Of rude hands dare assail. But yet no need
To quit the service of the Crucified.
I well might worship Him in secret still :
He looks but at the heart. These foolish gods
Of heathendom are nought but empty names.
Sprinkling a little incense on their shrines,
I bind myself to nothing, while I win
The glory of the kingdoms of the world.'

And Claudia listened while the trumpet voice
Thus sounded in the chamber of her heart.
Her pulse beat strangely, and the mounting blood
Kindled her cheek and flushed her breadth of brows,
While her eyes flashed ambition. But at length
The wily tempter overreached himself,
A horror seized upon her shuddering soul,
And at the feet of God she fell, to rise
Strong in His strength ; re-armed with holy thoughts.
Then thus she answered to the evil one :—

' False, boastful spirit, all thy potent skill
Fails to conceal thee. Thy bold blasphemy
Stands forth unveiled and hideous, breaking through
Its thin disguise. But were I all thou say'st,
Would that give cause to turn against the hand
That made me such ? Would that thy swelling words


Of flattery were true ! that I were more
A thousand-fold than thou hast dared to say !
Then were my life a worthier offering
On the pure altar of the God of gods,
My Father, my Redeemer. Yet e'en then
How worthless a return for His vast love !
How torn and blemished in His holy eyes !'

Then, baffled utterly, the voice was still.
But Claudia, like to one who in the games
Strives for the mastery with a cruel foe
And hardly wins, lay prostrate, almost dead.
For many days her weary soul crept through
Its little round of duty and of love,
Feebly, and almost blindly. But the while,
The unseen messengers of God encamped
About her lonely path, and held her steps,
And strengthened and renewed her inmost heart
With costly cordials from the heavenly store.

And in those days she prayed, and said,

“ O Lord !

Thou knowest all things, Thou dost know I love
Thee above all. Not as I ought to love,
Not with the joyous instinct of Thy saints,
Yet still sincerely : with a love that longs



To grow beyond its feeble self, and change
Its languid preference for a glowing zeal.
Yea, Lord, Thou knowest all things : Thou dost know
I have been sorely pressed on every side :
My feet have almost gone from under me :
My steps have well-nigh slipped : the enemy
Has fought against me furiously ; and though
Thou through Thy strength hast made me conqueror,
Yet am I sorely bruised and broken now.
Pity me, Lord ! Thou knowest all my frame :
Remember I am dust ! and therefore prone
To cleave thereto. Thou who before I was
Didst choose the mould wherein it pleased Thee
To cast my being, Thou dost fully know
The yearning weakness of my woman's heart.
Save me, my Father ! save me from myself.
Let not my foes assail me suddenly,
While thus I languish. O most tender heart
Of Christ ! have pity on my feebleness,
And send me succour, ere it be too late ! ”

Meanwhile far off upon the Cymric shores,
Through all the early and the later spring,
And through the glowing centre of the year,
The pilgrims pushed their peaceful victories.

But when the summer waned and all the vales
Stood thick with golden sheaves whose tasselled heads
Drooped in the sun, there came a messenger
To Cadair's hut ; where as their custom was
At harvest tide, although with unused arms,
They swayed the sickle in the narrow field
Won from the forest by the herdsman's skill.

Thrice welcome was the word that messenger
Had borne within his girdle, writ at large
On creamy vellum, sealed with the king's seal.

“ Greetings be multiplied, O friends beloved,
To you and to the faithful household round,
And chiefly to our sister Gwendolen.
Know that our exile ends, and that we seek
The mist-wreathed isle again. With us our sire,
Our queen, our daughter, and her Roman lord,
With others dear to us and dear to you :—
The spouse and children of the Maccabee,
And one beside. We charge you, spread not forth
The fame of this our coming, lest the few
That still have held their fealty should arise
To greet us as their king, and shed their blood
For that which cannot be ; for we have sworn.

“ Now when this reaches you at harvest time

In Cadair's hut, then know in that same day
Our galley grates the shore. Forthwith arise :
Beyond Trefrân, beyond Dunraven's hill
Pursue the sunset, till a river bars
Your farther steps. Thence turning inland track
The river's course along a winding vale
For nigh three leagues. Then will the valley's head
Branch out in antlers to the right and left.
Adown the open vale upon the right
A still stream glides below a rock-crowned hill.
Adown the narrow glen upon the left
A torrent roars among huge tumbled rocks.
Follow the torrent till its calming voice
Yields to the murmur of a waterfall.
Cross at the ford below the fall and search
The wooded heights above, and you shall find
A rustic dwelling. There await in peace
Our coming. These are writ by Caradoc."

Speechless with joy and wonder at the first,
Then with a tangled tide of questions, poured
In the confused ears of the messenger,
They heard the thrice-bless'd news, and straight arose
To follow where the king had pointed them ;
And Guendolen would fain have followed too,

.

But hearkened to their counsel, and delayed
Until the lodge were fitted to receive
Its royal guests.

Upon the second morn

They tracked the vale below the rock-crowned height
That lifted grey and ivied battlements
Against the purple heath of distant hills.

But since the unshorn forest filled the land
It was but here and there between the boughs
They caught a distant glimmer of the crags ;
But here and there athwart the underwood,—
Thick with tall ferns, and hemlocks silvery green,
And flecked with flakes of sunlight,—could they see
The glitter of the river in the sun.

Along a rough and tangled forest-track

They pressed with eager steps. The Maccabee
With vigorous limbs beat back the encroaching boughs,
Clearing the path for Julius' reverend form,
Bent low with years and toils ; and as he snapped
The shining toughness of the hazel stems,
And crushed the giant hemlocks under foot,
And flung back brief directions and replies
To Julius in the rear, he seemed inspired
As with a double life. . Whene'er he spoke,

Although the theme were trivial, his deep tones
Were mellow with a secret joy, his looks
Shed on the meanest things a gorgeous light.
A ray shot outwards from the dazzling hope
That glorified his heart ; the hope that soon,—
So God preserved her in the hours between,—
His eyes so long divorced from her sweet looks,
His ears so long bereft of her sweet voice,
His life so long the restless widower
Of her meek wisdom, should be filled once more
With Miriam's presence.

So the Maccabee
Pushed onwards eagerly, and Julius' heart
Was light, and lightly rose on wings of praise.
To both the myriad myriad leaves and flowers,—
Each happy with its sparkle of the sun,
Or with its cool nest of translucent shade ;—
And all the countless creatures of the wood,
Insects and birds and nimble-footed things
That glanced across the dappled ground, or sprang
From bough to bough, seemed like an instrument
Of many strings, played by a master's hand,
Tuned to the joy that sang within their hearts.
So went the dewy morning-hours. But now

The languor of the limbs began to steal
Upon the watching brain, began to numb
Its active workings ; till at length one thought
Repeated in the same unvaried chime
Was all it could. Then for the Maccabee
Rang to and fro the king's heart-thrilling phrase :—
“ With others dear to us and dear to you.”
And if a playful wavelet of the stream
Swerved to the side against a mossy root
It softly said to him,—‘ *and dear to you.*’
While ever in the ears of Julius rang
“ And one beside ; ” and all the teeming life
Within the woods re-echoed,—‘ *one beside.*’

Thus then they fared along ; and when they reached
The antlers of the vale, the drowsy noon
Lulled all the warm earth and the glowing sky.
Each bush that greenly dotted the hill side
Slept on its own blue carpeting of shade,
And all the tender voices of the wood
Drooped faint and low. Yet onward, onward still
The pilgrims pushed unflagging, through the glen
Where the white torrent poured through tumbled rocks.
And when the creeping shadows might be seen
To have veered a little eastward, they could hear

The deep-toned murmur of a waterfall
Above the jangle of the nearer stream.
And when the sun, aslant through sloping boughs,
Trickled in jewels down the enamelled bark
Of beech and ash and ruddy sycamore,
They saw beyond the border of the wood
The tremulous, silvery flashing of the fall.
And now the path, emerging from the trees,
Led its white track across a pebbly beach
That floored the hollow scooped by the cascade.
Here for a space the stream unrolled itself
Smooth as a riband on the level stones,
And narrowed by the drought. Behind, the cliffs
Were streaked and stained far upwards ; for the storms
And thaws of winter filled the hollow gulf
With eddying whirlpools, whose long swell upswept
Against the rocky walls, now greenly gay
With ivy-wreaths and fringes of the fern.

PART V.

HERE then the pilgrims plucked their sandals off
And girt their garments close to cross the ford.
Which having done they climbed the rocky heights
And gained the upper stream. But as they searched
Its shores, thinking to leap from rock to rock
And gain the thicket on the farther side,
They saw a wasted figure totter forth
From out the thicket to the water's edge,
And sink exhausted.

Then the Maccabee,
His muscles strung by sudden impulse, sprang
Across the stream and hastened to the spot


Where lay the man, lost in a deadly swoon.
His lean and haggard frame was scantily clothed
With miserable shreds. His long black locks
Streaked with the grey of sorrow, more than time,
Hung by his hollow cheeks and cavernous eyes.
But with a hand as gentle as the hand
With which a mother tends a sickly child
The Maccabee upraised his head from off
The last year's leaves, saying within himself,
'Sure, I have seen or dreamed of such a face
As this before?' And as he thought thereon
And wondered, Julius had reached the place,
And drawn a flask of cordial from his belt,
And touched the breathless nostrils and pale lips;
Until at length with a long, fluttering sigh
The eyelids opened, and the startled soul
Looked forth bewildered. Then he filled a cup
That hung upon the flask, and bade him drink.

Now when the wine had roused his languid pulse
He looked from each to each with eyes that grew
More happy as they gazed; and gazing thus
His deathlike features quickened somewhat, while
He faintly murmured to himself,—“Thank God
It is no dream. These are the very men

In living shape and substance."—Then more loud,
Yet still in weary and exhausted tones,
Looking above,—“ O God, dweller in heaven,
I thank Thee who hast thought upon me thus.”
And as he spoke, they said within themselves,
‘ Sure, I have heard or dreamed of such a voice
As this before ? ’

But now their chiefest care
Was how to find the woodland lodge, that so
Ere nightfall they might safely shelter him,
This helpless wretch, whose trust in the true God
Made them more marvel at his misery.
But when he heard them question of the place,
He raised his heavy eyelids once again,
And bade them ‘ stay him upon either side
And he would guide them thither ; for himself
Had dwelt there half a life-time—dwelt alone.’
So having lightly raised his wasted frame,
They bore him on the track he showed to them,
And found the place they sought.

It was no hut
Like Cadair’s, but a many-chambered hall.
Once a fair summer-palace of the king,
But now half ruined by neglect and time.



Yet was one chamber habitable still,
To which he pointed them : where entering
They found the smouldered ashes of a fire.
Against the wall flapped sadly here and there
Fragments of frayed, discoloured tapestry,
And scanty wrecks of household moveables
Stood on the sloping floor. A heap of fern
Strewed one dark corner. A dry drinking-horn,
An empty trencher, and a broken lamp
Lay on a tottering table. Here they stayed
Their steps, and Julius unclasped his scrip
And fed the stranger ; while the Maccabee
Revived the smouldering embers ; for the night
Was closing, and the chilly woodland dews
Fell through each gaping crevice in the roof.

Now when the wretched man was warmed and
cheered,
They asked him,—“ Who art thou ? what strange
mishap
Has brought thee to this miserable state ?
And wherefore art thou dwelling thus alone ? ”
Then thus he answered :—

“ I am Cynfrân : he
Who met you in the marsh five summers since,

The day you landed. But I marvel not
You should not know me."

Here he lifted up
A pale, transparent hand against the fire,
And faintly smiled to see the red flame dance
Through the thin muscle, saying,—

"This frail hand
Then swung the heaviest broad-sword easily
As you might swing a hazel wand; and threw
Straight to its aim the iron-pointed spear
For half a furlong. But 'twere long to tell
What brought me to this miserable plight;
Or rather to that miserable plight
In which you found me: all is altered now,
Thanks be to God above. And long to tell
Why thus I dwell in utter solitude,
Or have been dwelling: all is altered now,
Thanks be to God, to Llarian, and to you."

"But tell us none the less," the pilgrims said,—
(Whose wonder grew to hear of Llarian)—
"And tell us, more than all, how thou hast learned
To call on the true God."

At that he dropped
His hand and gazed into the fire's red heart

As if the story of his life were traced
In its fantastic forms : while a fierce spark
Shot suddenly from out his hollow eyes,
Fading as suddenly :—

“ Ah, sirs ! ” he said,
“ You know not what you ask. I dare not turn
The black page of the past, lest from its grave
The spectre of revenge should rise again
To grapple with my newly rescued soul.
Let this suffice. I was a chieftain’s son.
While yet a slender boy my heart rejoiced
In battle : the shrill trumpet-call ; the roll
Of scythèd cars ; the rattle of the spear
Against the hollow buckler ;—were to me
Sweeter than sweetest music. The long roar
Of host encountering host more flushed my heart
Than softest greetings from the rosiest mouth.
The close fight hand to hand ; the deadly grip
Of desperate foes ;—thrilled my delighted sense
More than the warm clasp of the whitest arms.
So in my youth I followed with my sire
To the king’s camp, when Aulus Plautius
Assailed him with the veteran hosts of Gaul.
For three stern years we strove, but strove in vain

To curb the conquests of the aliens ;
And in the end they crushed us in the West,
And made the land beyond the eastern streams
A prey to rapine. In that third sad year
I bore a message from Prince Owain,—son
Of Brân, grandson of Llyr the gracious king,
And elder brother of our Caradoc,—
To his dark princess, Lady Guendolen :
For whom and for their child the boding prince
Had found a mountain refuge in the north,
A June day's journey from the royal camp.
Then first I learned that love is something more
Than pleasure in a woman's loveliness.
I saw among the maids of Guendolen
One whose clear beauty was but as the veil
That tempered down the shining of her soul.
Straight my heart clave to her, and hers to me ;
And when on the third day, my errand done,
I slowly rode adown the winding vales,
Lost in fond musings,—like a man possessed
With some new life that almost slays the old,
Yet makes him twenty-fold the man he was,—
And sought Prince Owain in the royal camp,
I asked of him the hand of Angharad,

She being an orphan, and he next of kin :
He did not say me nay ; and all my heart
Leapt onward to the happy time to come.

“ I could not speak of those delightful days
Whose cruel sweetness only mocks me now,
But that this languid pulse, slow settling down
To an eternal stillness, cannot rise
In dangerous throbs.

“ Moreover,” here he cast
His looks on Julius, “ I have learned, though late,
That the most vile, inexpiable wrong
That ever yet was done by man to man,
Shrinks into nothing by the monstrous growth
Of that vast wrong he heaps upon himself,
Who, wrenching off his soul from God and good,
Sells her pure beauty to the vilest ends ;
Whether revenge, or some yet viler end,
If there be viler.”

At this Julius rose
Astonished and transfigured by the light
That flashed upon him. “ Can it be,” he said,
“ That bitter utterance, which broke from me
Before I was aware, and for the which
How often have I fasted silently

And wept in secret, was the voice of God
Unto thy soul? Perchance 'tis often so :
That the first impulse of a heart whereon
His spirit broods, may lead a nearer way
To His great ends than colder afterthoughts.
But, I beseech thee, do not check thy tale."
Then Cynfrân spoke again :—

“ The autumn came

And Llyr's last fight was fought ; the alien bands
Slew or dispersed our hosts ; the ancient king
Died broken-hearted, happier far than I
Who lived to curse my life. The morrow morn
I gathered from the forests and the wilds
The scattered troops of Owain, who had fallen
First in the battle, as he led the charge
Of the scythed chariots on the Roman flank.
And as with these I sought the mountain cell,
My heart was heavy with the heavy news
That must be borne to Lady Guendolen.
But for myself !—Oh mortal blindness, cooped
In a stone's throw of space, a point of time ;—
As for myself ! the bitterest of my grief
Was that I did not grieve more bitterly.
For evermore my untamed heart rebelled

Against the burden of the land undone,
Against the burden of Prince Owain slain,
And danced for rapture, thinking of my love.
As one who gaily takes a poisoned cup,
Unguessing at the fate that lurks within,
And drinks a torturing death with nods and smiles,
So as we neared the place, I spurred my horse
Before the rest, eager for Angharad,
And caring not that common eyes should note
Our greetings :”—

Here he ceased, and slowly rose
To his full height, and staggering to a seat
In the far corner, sank down heavily ;
Then spoke from out the darkness with a voice
Half strangled, awful :—

“ ’Twas a needless care :
No light step flew to meet me : no shy arms
Fell soft about my neck. But as my path
Made its last turn, there, full before me, stood
A wan and ghastly image ; with bright hair
Blackened with blood ; with arms that thrust me back,
As horror-struck I lighted from my horse ;
And a changed voice, that uttered, ‘ Touch me not !
For I am lost ;—ruined for evermore.

Ah ! would that thou hadst slain me with thy sword
Ere thus I died to thee, died to myself,
To all the fair earth and the pleasant skies.
I have striven to take my life, here is the wound
Deep in my temple, but my hand was weak.
O Cynfrân ! I was blameless as the lamb
In the wolf's jaws. But yet I cannot live,
Cannot look on thee, never can be thine :
All that has passed : the sweetness of our love
Is drowned for ever in this bitter close.'
Then sank she to the earth ; and as I strove
To lift her, scarcely knowing what I did,—
For right, and wrong, love, pity, and revenge
Whirled in a mad confusion through my brain,—
She snatched my sword, or ere I was aware,
And fell upon the point, and so she died."

Here Cynfrân paused : while those two held their
breath

In speechless awe and pity. For a space
Nothing was heard except the sobbing flame,
The mournful heaving of the tapestry,
And far aloof within the midnight woods
The howling of the wolves. He spoke again :
"Then fearful darkness fell on me, through which

Shot gleams of light more fearful, for I learned
By timid answers wrested from the troops,
That some before they left the battle field,
And some by flying rumours since the fight,
Had gained the key to this black mystery.
They told that 'on the morning of the fight
The Lady Guendolen,' (how bitterly
I cursed her rashness!) 'left her mountain-cell
Goaded by dark forebodings for her lord,
And with her maidens came to watch the field :
That on a knoll to rearward of our host
They took their stand : that Guendolen ere long,
Missing the glitter of Prince Owain's sword,
Dashed down into the thickest of the fight : '——
But here they checked themselves and cast scared
looks

Each on his fellow : looks that seemed to say
'Tell *thou* the tale, I cannot.' But I urged
And threatened, till they thrust a frightened boy
To the front rank, who told me, stammering,
'His mother was the nurse of Owain's child ;
That he, her son, stood by her on the knoll :
That when the Lady Guendolen sprang down
Into the battle, she had flung the child

Into his mother's arms ; that afterwards—
When the great legion, covered with locked shields,
Rose like a huge sea-tortoise from its place
And moved upon the ford, driving our troops
To right and left, and slaying as it came—
The frightened maidens, all save Angharad,
Fled shrieking ; but she said she scorned to flee
And leave her dearest lady succourless.
Then up the valley came the roaring tide
Of flying Cymri, driven before the foe,
And all the knoll swarmed over, black and bright
With the swart aliens and their flashing arms ;
The air rang round with shrieks and mockery
And he was trampled down and knew no more ;
Save this ;—and here his boyish voice was choked
With sobs and tears ;—‘ that now he sorely feared
His mother must be slain ; for one had seen
A Roman soldier bearing off the child,
The little bright-haired Gladys, and he knew
His mother ne’er had yielded up that child
Save with her own last breath.’ ”

Here Cynfrân paused
Once more ; and when he spoke again, his voice
Fell feebler yet :—

“ But I must hasten on ;
For this strange strength which props my sinking frame
Is but the ruddy gleam that flashes out
From the wild sunset of a stormy day.
My night is near ; yet not an endless night ;
Beyond I see a calmer day-spring dawn.
But help me now to lay my weary limbs
Upon this bed of bracken.”

So they came,
And laid him on the bracken, spreading out
Their upper garments on his trembling frame,
With tender hands ; then raised his sinking head
And held the cup of cordial to his lips ;
And as he drank thereof, his soul revived,
So that he spoke again.

“ Within the cell
We found the other maids of Guendolen,
All scared and stricken by their fellow's fate.
Scared too by a weird vision they had seen
Of Guendolen herself at earliest dawn,
Stalking in dumb, unnoting misery
Through all the chambers to an inner room,
Where Angharad lay crouched : with whom she held
A brief discourse ; and then with wilder looks

Rushed forth into the passes of the wood,
Calling on Gladys ('twas her lost child's name),—
On 'Gladys!' 'Gladys!'—till her distant voice
Died in the leafy depths, and all was still.

“ Upon a golden bier of autumn boughs
We placed my Angharad. I would not let
A hand except those virgin hands and mine
Lay finger on her, nor would let an eye
Gaze on her beauty, saving theirs and mine.
How calm she lay! all shame and bitterness
Wiped from the solemn sweetness of her looks.
Then ere we bare her out, adown her face
We drew the shining veil of chestnut hair.
With my own hands I dug her little grave
In the pine grove where first we plighted troth,
And there we left her. But before I turned
To leave her grave, I wrung from out my heart
The last slow drop of human kindliness,
(O God, forgive me!—yea, thou hast forgiven),
And swore a fearful oath by the three Rays,—
The sacred Rays that speak the unspoken Name,—
Henceforth to live apart from all mankind;
To make my life one long revenge; nor rest
From that revenge until my life was done;

To abjure the perils of the open fight
And so to lengthen out that long revenge.

“ Thus through the nine brave years while Caradoc
Repulsed the aliens, with a fiendish joy
I wrought my will upon them, day by day
Dooming my spirit to a deeper death.
When Caradoc defeated and betrayed
Was borne to Rome, I made my secret haunt
Within this summer palace of the king,
Hence only issuing forth as a wild beast
To seek his prey. And so the years went on,
Each darker than the last ; for the high God
Was slowly wreaking out his vast revenge
Upon me ; that revenge, which as thou saidst,
Is love and pity.

“ But there came a day
When from the cliffs above the tawny sea
I watched an alien vessel in the bay,
With hatred in my heart, and fierce desire
That craved the more the more I pampered it
With foul and cruel deeds. I saw you land ;
Judged you were Romans ; tracked your steps until
We met upon the marsh ;—the rest you know.
Thy stern rebuke like midnight lightning lit

My darkened heart, and showed me to myself ;
And loathing all things, and myself the most,
I sought my solitary lair again ;
There evermore I struggled to forget ;
But evermore came sounding in my ears
That stern rebuke. And evermore my soul
Reproached me with the vast and cruel wrong
Of selling her pure beauty to revenge,
And making her the shrinking paramour
Of all she loathed the most. And evermore
I strove to struggle forward to the light
And see the face of God ; but could not go :
A thousand dark suggestions plucked me back.
And in those days the Druids of the land,
As now, were prisoned in the sacred Isle,
So there was none to guide.

“ Then I recalled

A tale, which lightly heard in happier times,
Had lain as dead within my memory,
But now, requickened by occasion, rose
Alive with meaning. 'Twas a Druid's tale,
A legend from that far-off Indian clime
Which sages say lies in the utmost East,
Beyond the sunrise of the sunrise land.

It told of a fierce man of many sins
Who, when his sins had grown and multiplied,
And turned upon him like a troop of wolves,
Rending his soul, until he cried aloud
To God and man for help,—but there was none,—
Had met with one who bade him make his home
Within some drear and solitary place,
And there subdue himself with toilsome days
And sleepless nights ; to seek no grateful shade
From the hot sun of summer, neither fire
In the keen cold of winter ; to abuse
His palate with all bitter meats and drinks,
And these in scanty measure. Farther yet ;
To scourge his shrinking flesh, and, if needs be,
Thrust cruel hooks through all his quivering limbs ;
That so the sin which loves an easy home
Should find no rest in him. All this I did :
My strength would fail me now to utter half
The torments that I gathered to myself
With greedy hands, and bore without a groan ;
Witness these scarred limbs, and this wasted frame
Dying untimely. But 'twas all in vain ;
For while I slew the sin upon the right,
Upon the left the unslain self arose,

More vigorous than before. I could not lift
Myself above myself. And evermore,
As thus I vainly strove, the thicker grew
The veil upon my heart, and farther off
Glimmered the awful face of the Unseen.
And evermore a colder horror crept
Through all my spirit, as the fear of fears
Drew closer, showing ghastlier lineaments.
The fear that death instead of leading me
To the calm circle of eternal bliss
Would plunge me deep within the lowest sphere,
Penning my wretched soul within the husk
Of some brute form, to expiate my sin.

“ So passed the miserable years, until
This harvest gilt the valleys ; and I heard,
Far off, as one entombed alive might hear,
The voices of the reapers, and the songs
Of happy maidens binding up the sheaves.
Then did a subtle fever creep within
My almost empty veins, and the thin blood
Rose in a steamy cloud, and dimmed my brain ;
While mortal heaviness that was not sleep
Glued down my burning limbs. Time passed no more
On those alternate steps of night and day

Which freshen even misery, but writhed
In hideous indistinguishable length.
Thus had I lain—how long I know not—when
I heard a rustling sound within the room,
Which moved a wish in me to ope mine eyes,
Had not the weight of mountains held the lids.
Then cooling moisture touched my lips, a draught
Of blessed water met my parching thirst,
And a man's voice spake kindly ; but my voice
Refused to answer, as my eyes to look :
For all my vital force had sunk as low
As the last drop within a wasted well.
Yet over all my heart a still content
Spread at that voice.

“ Strength fails me now to tell
Of all his patient watching by my bed ;
Of all the tender offices of love,
Hard for a man to show to a dear friend,
In which he spent himself unsparingly
On me, a stranger. After many days
The fever left me ; and I woke from sleep
Like a new man, yet feeble as a babe.
Then first I saw him plainly ; for before,
'Twas a dim dream, in which a hand, a face,

A robe of many colours, moved obscure
Among the visions of my wavering brain.
He was a graceful youth, clad like the youths
Who learn the subtle mysteries of the bards ;
And with a face as clear as summer skies.
He told me how that journeying down the glen
He chanced upon this place, and found me laid
Sick unto death ; and so had staid awhile
To tend me in that sickness : making light
Of his great service.

“ As he moved about
With noiseless steps, and watched for every wish,
And day by day, unwearied, sought abroad
Among the flocks gone wild among the hills,
And in the garden, choked with rankest weeds,
For all I needed, how my heart upswelled
With wonder at the patience of his love !
And when at length I found a feeble voice
This wonder reached my lips, and, ‘ Oh,’ I sighed,
‘ Would that the great Unseen, Unsearchable,
Would have compassion on my soul, as thou
Hast had upon my body !’

“ ‘ Then,’ said he,
‘ Thou hast thy wish. The pity I have shown

Is but a spark enkindled by the flame
Of His compassion.'

“ So he spake, and drew
My sad tale from me, till I told him all ;
Told of the bitter blighting of my youth ;
Of the vile vow kept but too well ; of how
Your words had burnt asunder like a flame
The bondage of that vow ; yet left me bound
In thralldom full as hopeless though less vile.
At that a glow of glad astonishment
Flushed all his face, as thus he answered me :—

“ ‘ Now God be thanked. These are the very men
From whom I learned the things that set me free.
They taught me that the great Unsearchable ;—
He whom the Druids name not ; who they say
Dwells inapproachable, immoveable,
Far off among the vast eternities,
Shut in serene self-glory, heeding not
Our sighing waves that break about His feet ;
Or, at the best, as elder sages taught,
Whose boundless being is the sea whereon
The transient ripples of our lives arise,
In which they sink, unknowing and unknown :—
That He is Father of the souls of men ;

As much, yea more a thousand, thousand fold
Than earthly sires are fathers of our flesh ;
And as a father pities us. That still,
As earthly sires who wisely love their sons
Will seek for them a strenuous discipline
To mould the plastic mind and stubborn will ;
So has the Heavenly Parent built for us
This schoolhouse of the world, wherein to learn
The long laborious lessons framed to fit
Our inner manhood for the life beyond.
Nor this alone ; but that a blessed One,
Visible image of the unseen God,
Had late, within the memory of man,
Been born, and lived, and died upon the earth
To show these things. That now the time was passed
For gifts of pain, and sacrifice of blood,
Since all men in His gift and sacrifice
Were gathered homeward to our Father's heart,
If so we willed it.'

“ Thus he spake, and more.

I cannot set it forth in ordered words ;
I cannot trace the way it wrought on me ;
I only know that all my fetters fell ;
That while my spirit slept the sleep of death,


And only saw wild phantoms, only felt
A freezing nightmare holding me from God,
His eye was resting on me. And at length,—
As when a watcher bends a steadfast gaze
Upon the close-locked lids of one that sleeps,
His gaze awakes the sleeper,—so beneath
The Eye of love that lights the unseen world,
My wondering spirit woke from death to life.”

Then said the Maccabee, “ Let God be thanked.
But where is Llarian ? he who succoured thee ? ”
And Cynfrân answered. “ When my sickness turned
He went his way along the downward vale ;
For he was bent to find you, and had gone
Upon your track in vain for many a moon.
But on the third day after that on which
I watched his many-coloured robe grow dim
Within the woods, my sickness came again.
Again the subtle fever crept within
My almost empty veins ; again the blood
Rose in a steamy cloud and dimmed my brain.
Then driven by raging thirst, I staggered forth,—
But all was like a dream, a feverish dream,—
To seek the coolness of the stream below.”

With that he closed his eyes ; and turned his face

To the blank wall, and said, " I can no more ;—
I weary to the death and fain would sleep.
The burning pain has left me. Yea, who knows
But that I yet may live ? Well, life is sweet,
And what an altered thing would life be now."

And so he murmured till he slept. All night
The pilgrims watched alternate by his bed ;
And when his spirit stirred in sleep, the sense
Went wandering back to times long passed away.
As relics of a wreck which after-storms
Wash on the shore, the fragments of the past
Came sadly into sight. Again he rode,
Lost in fond musings, down the winding vales ;
Again he seemed to talk with Angharad.
Her name returned for ever to his lips
And dwelt upon them, like the sweetest phrase
Of some old melody. So went the night ;
But when the day began to break, they saw
A solemn and unutterable change.
No sunrise could uplift the leaden veil
That masked his features. Then they thought,—
 ' perchance
His soul has passed ;'—and touched him ; but at that
He slowly opened eyes in which the light



Was quenched for ever ; made a feeble sign
That they should raise him ; and when this was done
Lay leaning upon Julius' breast, his arms
Drooping on either side, as droop the boughs
Of blasted trees. Then,—in an altered voice,
Whose plaintive hoarseness seemed the pining ghost
Of the deep tones of other days,—he said—
“ Last night I thought, or dreamed I thought, per-
chance

I yet might live. That thought is gone : and gone
The wish that gave it birth. For now I know
Such lives as mine are like to precious drops
Spilled on the ground : they mock recovery.
But in my heart of hearts a surer hope
Takes root among the ruins of the past.
The Hand that made me will not cast me off ;
The Love that through my darkest wanderings,
When least I dreamed of it and least desired,
Has followed me with whispers in the soul,
With touches reaching from the outer life,
Will follow still, beyond the unpierced dark
That fronts me now with scarce a step between.”

He paused ; and even the Maccabee himself
Felt hands of silence laid upon his lips :

Yet an officious conscience,—prone to think
We do God service when we violate
The heart's fine instincts,—forced him into speech :
So with constrained voice and disordered looks
That showed the lack of inward harmony,
He spoke abruptly to the dying man :—

“ Nay, friend, not so, there is no after-chance ;
Lose the soul here and all is lost beyond,
But save it here, and all the life is saved : ”
And would have babbled more ;—but Julius laid
A warning finger on his lifted arm,
Saying :—

“ And canst thou not entrust this soul
To Him who died to win it ? He has dealt
In secret with it, whispering as of old
To those that were the closest to his heart,
‘ Lo ! I have many things to say to you,
But now ye cannot bear them.’ Yet there comes
A pentecost to every waiting soul,
And therefore, soon or late, or here or there,
It comes to him.”

Meanwhile, the dying man
Heard not nor heeded ; but with radiant smiles,
Shed forth on that which seemed but empty air,

Looked out beyond them ; slowly raised his hand
As one who waves a signal to a friend,
And called aloud :—" I come ! " Then the hand fell,
The head sank forward, and the feeble breaths
Came feebler yet and farther each from each,
Till one as gentle as an infant's sigh
On which none other followed.

In that hour

The liquid sunrise, dropped through dewy trees,
Fell by the ruined casement to the floor ;
And rested on the russet couch, and reached
The shrunk and colourless hand, and wove a crown
Of flickering rays about the faded brow.
Amidst the utter stillness of the room
They heard the soft sounds of the waking woods,—
The insects' hum, the small birds' twittering,—
Nearer and clearer ; till at last a lark,
Pierced to the heart with joy, sprang from the grass
Of the neglected plot, and poured his soul
In floods of music, rising as he sung
Higher and higher in the brightening heavens.

Now when a second evening gilt the woods
And painted clouds were glassed within the stream,
The pilgrims who had toiled all day to fit

The ruined lodge to hold its royal guests,
Flung their tired limbs upon the grassy bank
Beside the ford. But scarce the Maccabee
Had lain a moment, scarce had time to note
How motionless the birch-sprays' tracery hung
Against the amber sky, when such a flood
Of fearful rapture,—held in check awhile
By strenuous toil and death's stern presence,—rushed
Into his heart, he leapt upon his feet,
Saying within himself:—"This very eve,
Perchance this very hour! O perilous joy,
Whose cup uplifted to my thirsty lips,
May yet be spilled untasted!" At that thought
He turned a troubled face upon his friend,
Crying:—"My father, all my heart is torn
With cruel fears; call thou aloud on God."

Then instantly the soul of Julius
Girt up her loins to climb the shining steps
Let down from heaven to earth. And as she rose
His worn-out bodily frame arose with her,
Unconsciously uplifted by her strength.
And when he ceased a calm ineffable
Sank on the Maccabee; and in his soul
He set his seal to this: that God is true

And all-sufficing ; that come joy, come woe,
All shall be well ; well in the after-world
If evil here : well in the after-time
If evil now.

But ere the sun's last smile
Had faded from the topmost eastern ridge,
The sound of steps and voices in the glen
Greeted the pilgrims' ears. And as they rose
Trembling with eagerness, the king appeared,
Striding before his kin and followers
To front the edge of danger. Then they ran
To meet him, and the aged Julius bent
To kiss the faded border of his robe ;
But Caradoc, whose stern, still reticence,
Shaken by many sorrows, now dissolved
In nameless pangs at sight of a friend's face,
Caught him in troubled silence to his breast ;
Then, loosening his grasp, cried,—

“ Pardon ! O my friend,
If at this hour of meeting, after years
Of woful exile on my part, on thine
Of toils untold, I speak but moodily.
God knows I am not thankless for His gifts :
Liberty, safe return with all I love

To my own land, and such a friend as thou
Restored to me : and most of all, the gift
Too priceless to be named with even these :
Acquaintance with Himself, which should bring
 peace,
And does in part. Yet bitter 'tis and strange,
That here upon the dear soil for the which
My fathers bled, and over which they held
A sway at least more righteous than the sway
Of other kings, their son should stand unknown,
Unrecked of, unlamented, undesired.
Here through this central fortress of our tribe,—
The tribe which hailed me sovereign, with a shout
That shook the Cæsars from their purple rest
Far off in Rome ; which for nine glorious years
I led from victory to victory,
Until we hurled the veteran legions back
Beyond the Sabren and the tawny sea ;—
Here, through Siluria, these three desolate days,
I pass, the aim of every curious eye,
Yet not a soul has greeted me but thou,
And thou an alien. No, I have not found one
That had the grace, remembering Caradoc,
To pause and look upon me with a sigh,

As if he thought :—‘ This squalid wayfarer
Is like the King ; or would be like the King
But for the mighty difference.’ No, not one !
I am as much forgotten as the dead ;
Nay, more forgotten. Peace, I know full well
All thou wouldst say : how I commanded you,—
By that great oath I swore unwillingly
Before the hateful city of the south
Opened her gates to set me free, and which
Though sworn unwillingly must still be kept,
Because, if Rome be faithless, God is true
And hates a lie ;—ye should not spread the fame
Of this my coming, lest the faithful few
That still have held their fealty should arise
To greet me as their king, and shed their blood
For that which cannot be. I might have spared
Such fine, fantastic scruples.”


Here he laughed,

A dry, self-scorning laugh :—“ Why, I have been
As simple as a maid ; who, honest soul,—
A little vain but honest,—fears to spoil
The peace of some forbidden lover, and so
Weaves many a subtle, self-deceiving plot
To shun him, or greet coldly. While his heart

Is all the while freer by half than hers,
Which bleeds in secret at the chilling change.
Yea, I did charge you thus, and would again,
And mean it from my heart. But ah ! my friend,
'Tis easier to deny a lover's prayer
Than rest contented when the faithless lips
That framed it have forgot their own desire.

“ But shame upon the selfish heart that broods
On its own griefs in such an hour as this.
Behind me come my father and my queen,
The spouse and children of the Maccabee,
With faithful friends and servants who have shared
Our exiled fortunes. Eirgen and her lord
Have taken second shipping at the port
Of Venta, thence to cross the tawny sea
To Avon and the City of the Cleft ;
So by the healing Waters of the Sun
To Sarrlog town beside the hanging stones,
Where lie his lands.”

Then Julius, seeing the king
Answered himself, and turned to other themes,
Forbore to answer him. And Caradoc
Passed onwards to the ford, a lonely man,
With self but half subdued. And as he went




He waved a stately hand to Julius
To leave him and to meet the prince and queen.
And soon those frosty-haired, dry-wrinkled men,
Prince Brân and Julius, on each other's necks
Fell with right joyful greetings. For their hearts,
Kept fresh by sap of generous sympathies,
Were in mid-summer still. And Julius kissed
The hem of the Queen's robe, the sad-faced Queen ;
Who, worn with exile and the many woes
Which falling on the head of him she loved
Descended with a double weight on hers,
And wearied with rough journeying, had scarce
The life left in her that could frame a smile.

Meanwhile the Maccabee had hastened forth
To welcome his dear spouse and tender babes.
Deep in the wood he met with Miriam.
Then dumb at first even with excess of bliss
They hung upon each other's quivering lips.
Next, held apart the length of loving arms,
Gazed each on each, half doubtfully ; the while
Strange, painful laughter, mixed with painless tears,
Shook all their unnerved features. Till the babes,
Half shy, half jealous, only half assured,
Thrust their small hands into their mother's hands.

Then the vague rapture inexpressible
Found voice and action ; as the mother held
The doubtful boy in reassuring arms,
And made him know his father ; who the while
Crushed all his dusky curls caressingly
With his large hand, and looked him in the face
With gentleness ineffable, and smoothed
And lessened the deep rolling of his voice
To suit his shaken spirits. While the girl,
One hand still clinging to her mother's robe,
Ventured the other in the broad brown palm
That courted its caress : then as if nerved
By its firm pressure, stood erect and raised
Her soft lips to the stranger's bearded mouth,
Sealing the triple bond that binds the world.

So passed they with their followers to the ford.
But Julius lingered, thinking in himself,
“ Ah, wherefore did I let a casual word
Tempt me to long for that which cannot be.”

But as he thought he lifted mournful eyes,
And saw—was it a dream ?—or did he see
A maiden standing where the path emerged
From the thick wood ? As motionless she stood
As any statue, gazing at the fall.



Then Julius stammered in his very thoughts—
Thinking :—‘ How like,—yet ah ! the difference !
This is a woman, and my Claudia
Is but a child, a simple, slender child.’
But as he thought, and stammered in his thoughts,
She turned and saw him, and a rosy dawn
Of recognition overflowed her face,—
Her rare, sweet face ;—and forth she flew to him,
Embraced his hand and laid it on her head,
Crying :—“ My father Julius !”

Then he wept

For joy and gratitude, and clasped her hands
Within his own, and gazed upon her face
To find the little Claudia of old times
In this fair woman. So with trembling lips
Thanked God between his tears ; and when at length
He found a settled voice, inquired of her
How this great wonder might have come to pass.

Then in a chastened voice she answered him,—

“ Alas ! my father, ’tis a weary tale :

Let this suffice thee. In these five long years
Have I been learning that my direst foes
Are those of my own house. I do not speak
Of Plantius,—God forgive him,—but of things

In my own bosom : subtle enemies
That lurk within the heart, and clothe themselves
With light like angels. I have been sore bestead ;
My steps have well nigh slipped ; but the kind Christ
Has still upheld my weakness. When the foe
Has pressed the closest, He was closer still
And stronger than the strongest. He has sent
His ministering spirits, oftentimes unseen
But often seen, and clothed in flesh and blood,
To succour me when ready to despair.
The chief of these has been the noble Brân,
Whom on the fatal day of massacre
I saw with thee. Again, and yet again,
His keen-eyed watchfulness has found the net
Spread for my feet, and by a timely word,
Or secret sign, has saved me. God be thanked !
At length Pomponia, mother of my love,
Hearing a rumour that the prince and king
Were set at large on oath of fealty,
And would return to Britain, urged on me
(Speaking in secret by my faithful nurse)
To leave the wicked city, and with them
Sail to the land I loved, the land whose name
Was graven on my heart. So after strife



Of sore conflicting thoughts, yearnings of heart
Which only He that made me comprehends,
I saw the path where He would have me go ;
And here, in mine own land, with His good help,
Will I be His more fully ; spend myself,—
Yea and be spent, when my reluctant soul
Hangs back from sacrifice,—for those He loves.”

While thus she spake they reached the ford, o'er
which

The faithful servants following the king
Had laid a rugged bridge of boughs fresh hewn,
That the faint queen and Miriam and her babes
Might pass dry shod. And Claudia ceased to speak,
And looked around bewildered : to the fall
That poured from the high cliff, and to the pool,
And to the woods above. Till Julius said,
“ What has amazed thee, daughter ? ” To the which
She answered :—


“ 'Tis most strange. As even now
Through the arched woodland path I saw beyond
The silver-flashing fall, it seemed to me
A most familiar thing ; and now again
That strange, mysterious sense of new, yet old,
At once disturbs and calms me. Either in,

Or severed from the body, I have seen
This place before ; but whether in a dream,
Or in the waking world, I cannot tell."

Then Julius, marvelling, held his peace. And while
It seemed to her he thought of other things,
His fancy,—like the hoar-frost shooting through
The scattered moisture and congealing it
Into symmetrical, articulate forms,—
Arranged her fragmentary memories
With other fragments caught from other lives,
Till in a perfect whole they crystallized
On the transparent surface of his mind.

Thus speaking, silent thus, they crossed the stream,
And climbed the heights, and gained the ruined lodge.
There as they entered, stood the prince and king,
Gazing with speechless pity in their eyes
Upon the dead, the while the Maccabee
Rehearsed his dolorous tale. To tender hearts
All bitter things, though past, are bitter still ;
And sorrow sorrowful, ev'n when assuaged
For evermore.

Upon the morrow morn
The pilgrims hollowed his sequestered grave
Above the sounding fall. And round the grave




Arose the chaunt of many voices blent
In psalms of praise for his deliverance.

Now on that day on which the pilgrims left
The herdsman's hut, the heart of Guendolen
Could find no rest. Some power within her seemed
To urge her to go forth and follow them.
Therefore when on the morrow Llarian came,
Full bent to find them, straightway she arose
And claimed his guidance. With a reverent hand
He led her forth, and through the woodland wilds
Retraced his steps. Four days they journeyed thus
By gentle stages, and on the fifth morn
Entered the glen where the white torrent poured
Through tumbled rocks. And when the sun rode high,
Crossing the ford, they heard the funeral psalm
Ring through the woods above, blent with the roar
Of falling waters. Nearer drawn, one voice
Soared in sweet shrillness high above the rest.
Then in the shadowed border of the wood
They checked their steps, until the latest note
Died on the air.

Then Guendolen went forth,
Calmly as one who takes expected bliss,
And gathered Claudia closely to her heart,

And claimed her as her child and Owain's child,
Saying,—“ I need no proof: thy eyes are his,
And all thy bright face and thy golden hair
Are his, my Owain's. Here we dwelt in peace
Before the rising of the Cymric tribes,
And here, 'twas shown me, we should meet again.
Upon the level turf beside the ford
Thy tender feet first tottered off alone,
Lured by some sunlit flower, and here thy hand
Shall stay my feet when tottering to the grave.
And when long centuries have rolled away,
This waterfall, my Gladys, shall be called
Still by thy name.”

And in those days she fell
Into a trance, and saw with opened eyes
The visions of the future. And she said,—
“ When three-score generations shall have slipped
Into the life unseen, whose waters wide
Sweep round the life we see ;—when this new faith,
Old as the sun, yet new as is the dawn,
Has mastered all the masters of the world ;—
When lightened by its light the eye of man
Begins to spell the universe and solve
Its secret mysteries ;—when having drawn



The wisdom of high Heaven into his heart
Even with his mother's milk ; 'yea, long before,
Through countless veins of custom and descent,—
He turns and plumes himself thereon, as if
All were his own, himself the source of all,
And whispers to his own proud heart,—‘ Behold
Thou art my God, and there is none beside.’
Yea, even then, the memory of my child
Shall still be blessed in Britain.”

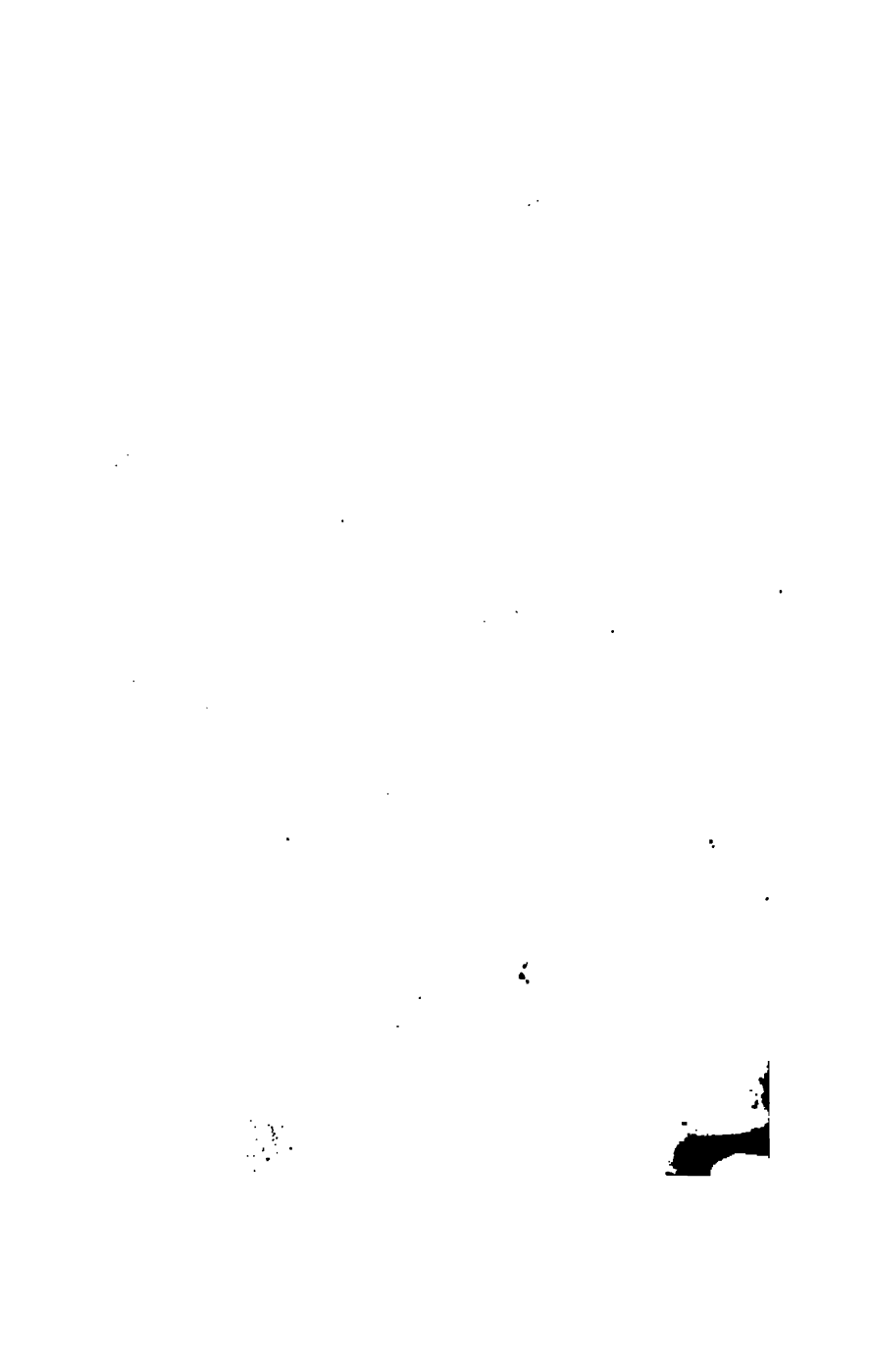
Thus the lodge

Become the peaceful homestead of the prince,
The king, the queen, the widowed Guendolen,
And Claudia, darling of their fallen house.
Beside the knoll where first the pilgrims found
The lady Guendolen, the prince upreared
A temple to the living God, the first
That ever rose in Britain. Thither too
Came many bards and bardic novices,
Drawn from the sacred isle by Llarian's fame,
To sit at Julius' feet and learn from him
The worship of the living God, and pass
Through mystic waters to the side of Christ ;
To lead new lives of holy thoughts and deeds,
And solemn prayers and praises : so the place

Is called *the Church of Ild* to this day.
And hard beside the church, the Maccabee
Dwelt with his dark-eyed Miriam ; and their house
Grew bright with children's beauty, musical
With children's voices ; while he went and came
Leading a pastoral life among the flock
Brought homewards from the heathen wilderness.

But as for Claudia :—how she kept her vow
Of service to her Lord :—whether apart
From tenderer earthly ties she followed close
Behind His bleeding feet, alone like Him ;—
Or whether bent beneath a homelier cross
She moved in lower paths, and daily died
In daily discipline of household cares,
Sweetened by love whose sweetness symbols His ;—
We know not : only knowing that her name,
Embalmed by purest saintship, lingers still
In old traditions as a blessed name.
Her tale is told : the legendary spring
That trickled from the summits of the past
Has poured its little urn, and all is still.

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